

Joscelyn at the
forts

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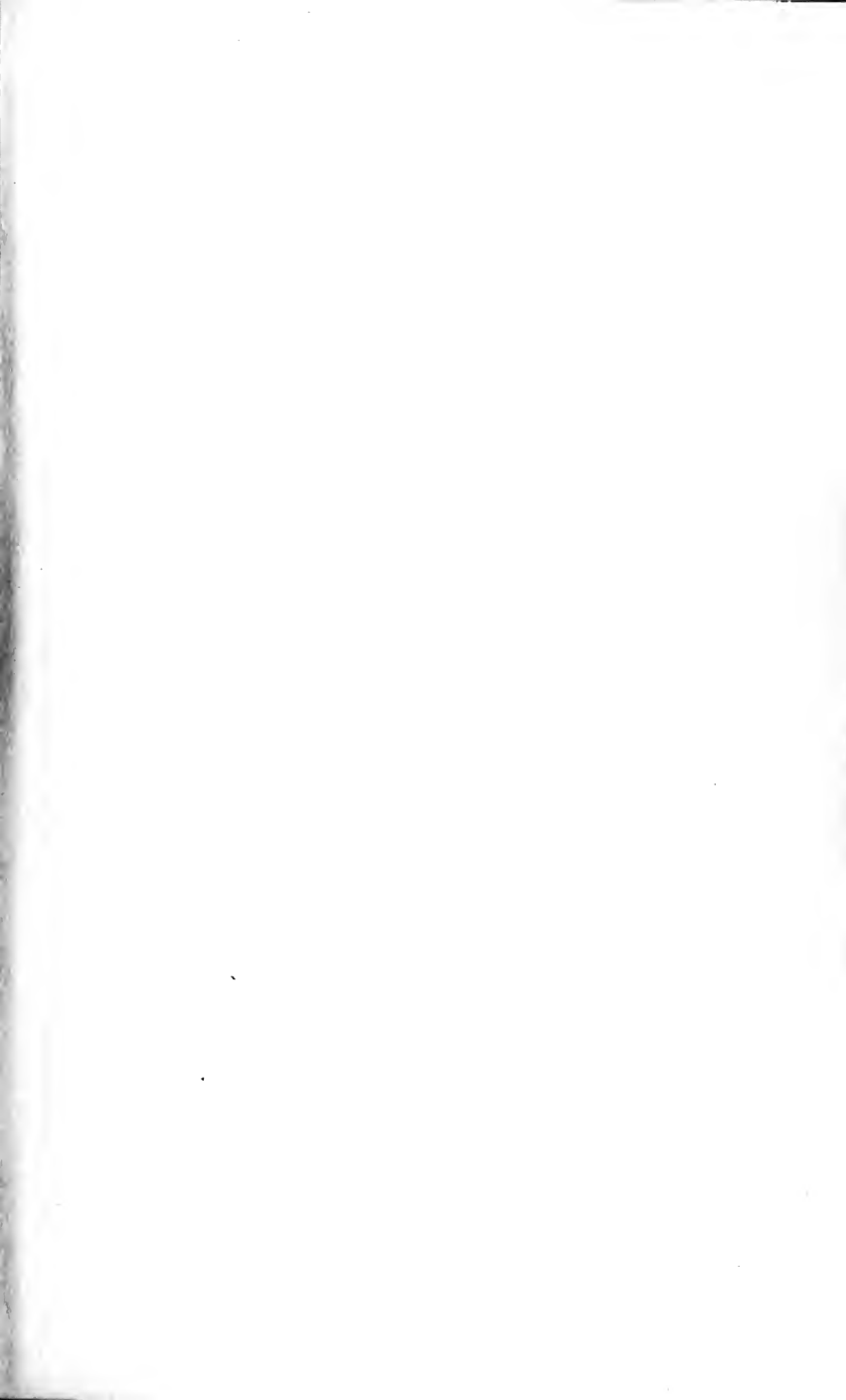


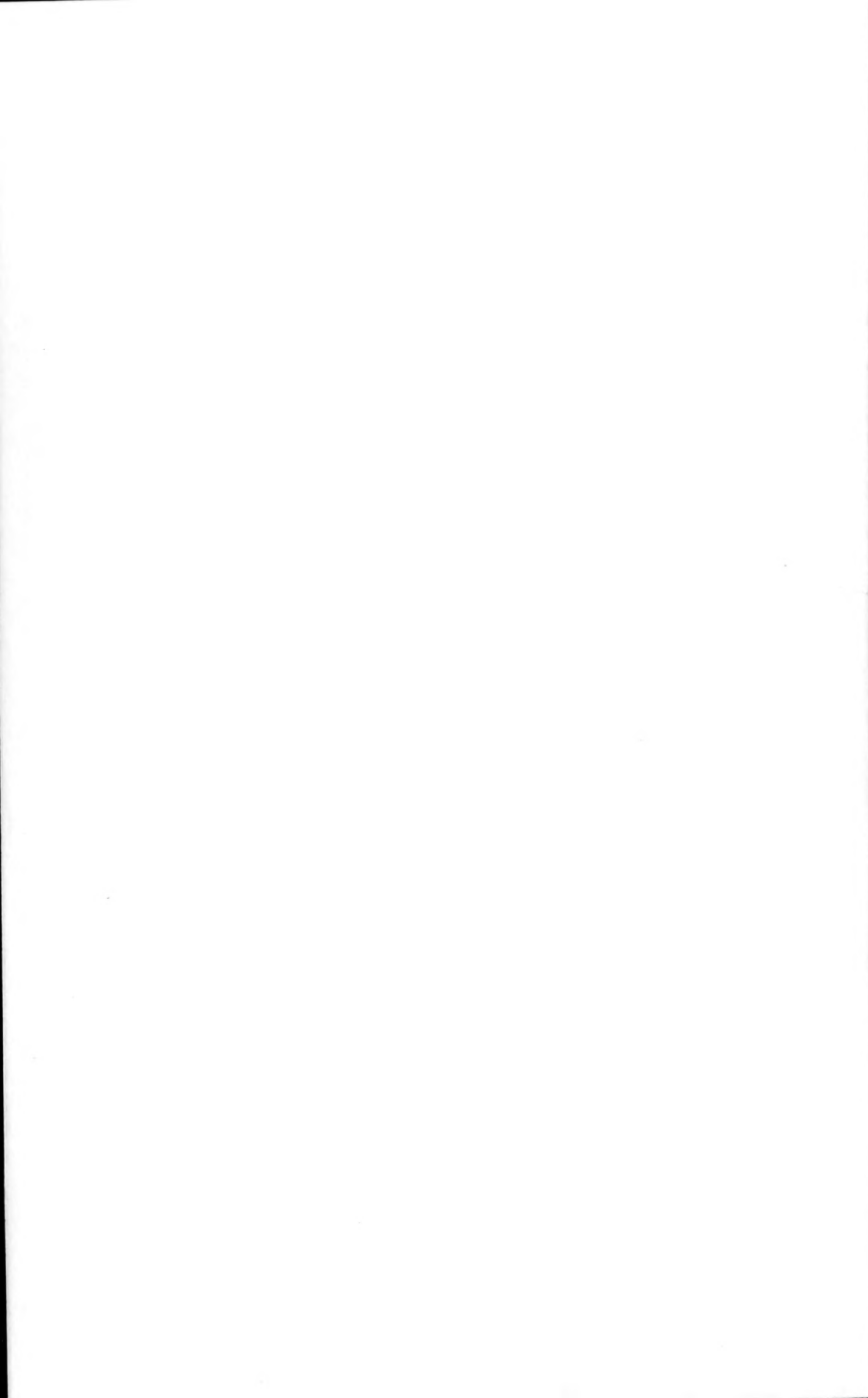
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Crownfield, Gertrude, 1867-
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Joscelyn of the forts





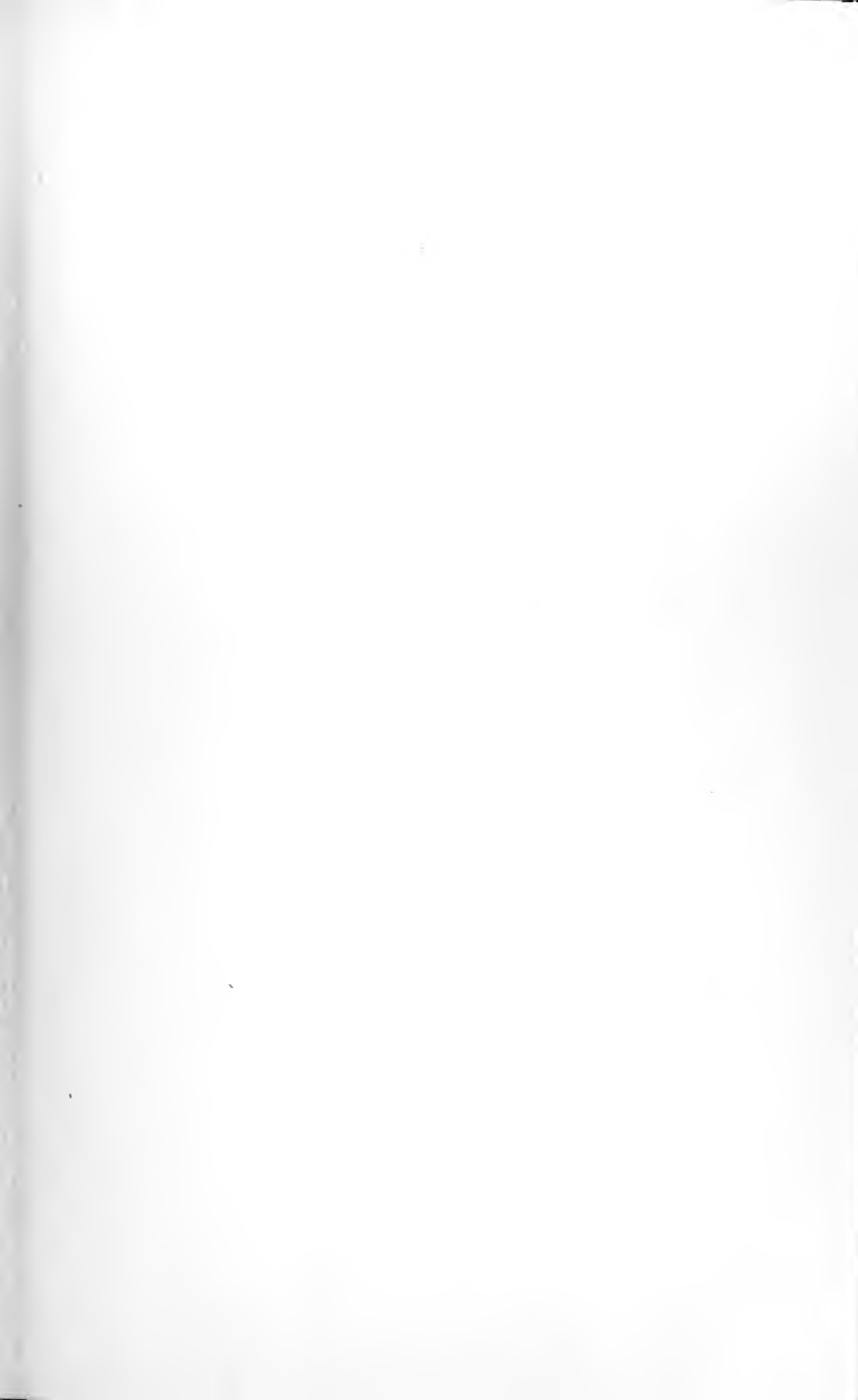




*Joscelyn
of the Forts*



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*Without an instant's hesitation Montcalm flung himself upon
the Huron*

Ioscelyn of the forts



GERTRUDE
CROWNFIELD

*Decorations by
George M. Richards*



JC 886 j

New York
E. P. DUTTON & CO., INC.



JOSCELYN OF THE FORTS



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To My Friend
CHARLES E. BAKER



CO. SCHOOLS
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FOREWORD

THE grateful acknowledgements of the author are due to her friend, Captain John McBride, U. S. A., for much valuable suggestion, and information as to military details and possibilities, and for his final critical review, from that standpoint, of the finished book. She owes much, also, to Mr. S. H. P. Pell, of New York, owner of Fort Ticonderoga, for many helpful monographs, photographs, and data in relation to that ruined stronghold.

Without the generous aid of these two gentlemen, this book could not have been written.

GERTRUDE CROWNFIELD.





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*The decorations for the title page
and wrapper were also done
by GEORGE M. RICHARDS*





*Joscelyn
of the Forts*





These came on without pause, only slackening on the last abrupt rise before the fort gate. Joscelyn, watching, presently saw an iron-grey horse, with a burly negro astride, come to a standstill for an instant in front of

the sentry, and then pass into the enclosure, and on to the barracks door.

"Mother," called she, turning quickly from the window, "Titus is come on Wolf! Mayhap he brings a message from Aunt Schuyler!" There was joyous excitement in the girl's voice, for Titus was wont to be the bearer of delight-promising invitations for her parents and herself, either to the town house of the Schuylers in winter, or in summer to their country mansion called the Flatts, some three miles out of Albany.

Although Captain Armstrong and his wife were in nowise kin to Colonel Schuyler's family, Joscelyn, in common with all the youth of Albany, called Madame Schuyler "Aunt," because of the warm affection which she had won.

Mistress Armstrong, a smile in her grey eyes, looked up from the needle which she had not ceased to ply industriously, although she had been lenient toward the inactivity of her daughter.

"Go, child, and see," she gave permission, and Joscelyn departed, curbing her tripping feet to a semblance of sedateness, since it was not seemly that she, a captain's daughter, should be lacking in decorum in her passing through the grim old fort.

Titus, motionless as an ebony statue, where he stood beside his horse, observed her admiringly, as she approached.

"Shinin' all de time. Dat's Miss Joscelyn," he murmured to himself. "Hair black and shiny like de crow's wing, eyes brown and glistenin' like de gold-brown shadders in de brook, cheeks like de reddest apple on de

bough. Lights up dis here dingy old fort, she do, jess a movin' through it!"

Unconscious of his opinion of her, Joscelyn gave him blithe greeting, and Titus laid a sealed missive in her hand with a flourish. "Fum de Madame," he announced, "and I'se to wait for de answer."

"Rest you, then, Titus, in the shade till I am back again," Joscelyn invited him, and sped light-footed to her mother.

"'Tis from Aunt Schuyler, as I guessed," she proclaimed. "If only it be to ask us to the Flatts! That would mean that I should see my sweet Catalina." Her face beamed the brighter at the very thought, for Catalina Cuyler, young niece and protégée of Madame Margaretta Schuyler, was Joscelyn's bosom friend.

Mistress Armstrong glanced swiftly over Madame Schuyler's beautifully exact script. "'Tis as you hope, Joscelyn. Madame Schuyler begs that we will dine with her, at the Flatts, tomorrow afternoon, at two of the clock."

Joscelyn marked her pleasure by a gleeful pirouette. "I may wear my flowered dimity, and my gauze apron, may I not, mother?" she coaxed.

"That you shall," consented her mother, "and now, fetch me my writing-portfolio, child. 'Twill pleasure your father prodigiously to go. There are matters concerning our farm at Schenectady on which he wishes to consult Colonel Schuyler. This invitation gives him opportunity."

In a flutter of joyous haste Joscelyn brought the leather-covered portfolio, set out ink, and grey goose quill, sealing wax, and taper, and sand-box. Then, like

some eager expectant bird, poised for instant flight, she hovered over her mother, while the courteously ceremonial reply was penned, and sealed.

This was a matter soon accomplished, for Mistress Armstrong, like Madame Schuyler, was educated far beyond most women of her time and place, and needed neither to rack her brain for fitting words, nor be delayed by a halting and unaccustomed pen. She shook the sand over the completed page, and, when the ink was dried, folded and sealed her letter.

Scarce waiting for the wax to harden under her mother's signet ring, Joscelyn took up the missive, and tripped off with it to Titus, staid decorum cast to the winds at the prospect of dining at the Flatts.

Again the hoof beats of Wolf resounded on the roadway, but this time slower, and more suited to the heat of the day, as the animal wended his way homeward reluctantly to the assured prospect of an afternoon in the hayfield, a task which he, as the favorite carriage horse of Madame Schuyler, considered to be quite beneath his dignity, and escaped from when he could.

Joscelyn, returning to the family quarters, found that her father was come in. From his face, and from her mother's, she gathered at once that something of far greater importance than their approaching dinner at the Flatts was forward.

Captain Armstrong did not leave her long in doubt as to what this might be.

"Come hither, my girl," he said bluntly, "and hear what's before us. Like enough 'twill cause you some distress."

Her eyes widening, Joscelyn perched herself lightly

upon the broad arm of his chair, and slipped her soft hand into his firm bronzed one. "If 'tis to your own liking, and to mother's, so will it be to mine," she declared unhesitatingly.

"That's my good lass," approved the Captain. "It cannot but cause you something of pain, nevertheless. I've orders from General Abercrombie to join the garrison under Colonel Monro at Fort William Henry."

In spite of herself, Joscelyn's countenance fell. "On Lake George, is it not?" she inquired. To go thither meant separation from all her young companions, and especially her beloved Catalina, a parting from her happy life and associations here.

"Ay," replied her father, "Lake George, and in the midst of the wilderness. I would not have your dear mother go with me to brave such privations and grave dangers as it will entail, but she gives no heed to me, and declares that go she will. That means that you go, too, my pretty. A rough untoward life 'twill be for you both, I fear."

Mistress Armstrong reassured him lovingly. "We shall be near to you, Ralph, and that means all."

Joscelyn throwing both arms about his neck asserted stoutly, "Indeed, indeed, it does mean all."

The keen eyes of the Captain misted a little. "A soldier's wife, and a soldier's daughter," he murmured, and then, briefly, "We go before the week is out."

Joscelyn knew, therefore, that it was her farewell visit to Catalina Cuyler that she was making when she entered the short avenue that led to the Schuyler mansion at the Flatts on the following afternoon. How often she had gathered with Catalina the morella cherries

hanging ripe and juicy from the trees behind the long row of white palings on either side of the avenue. How often Titus had waited at the horse-block as he did now, to assist her mother and herself to dismount, to relieve them of their linen foot-mantles, to lead away their horses to the stables at the back. Black Caesar, too, standing in the wide doorway to take her father's laced beaver, and hand her mother and herself on to the care of old Diana, was part and parcel of the delightful intercourse which had been theirs with the Schuylers, and which would soon be only a memory.

But she was allowed little opportunity for such reflections, for there was a crisp rustle of skirts, a swift rush of dainty satin-shod feet from the spacious hall within, and a pair of round arms were thrown about her neck. A blooming cheek was pressed to hers, and Catalina's self gave her impulsive greeting.

Graceful curtsies made to Mistress and to Captain Armstrong, Catalina swept Joscelyn away with her. "Come with me to my own chamber, sweet, and put off your sunshade, while Diana and Caesar tend upon your parents."

In this affectionate fashion she was hurried to Catalina's bower in the upper story of the mansion. Here Joscelyn smoothed her dark locks before the oval mirror, shook out the crumpled folds in her beflowered frock, and settled her gauze apron to the best advantage.

"How well the new frock becomes you!" asserted Catalina admiringly. "That cream-colored ground, those deep red roses set off your black hair to a marvel! And above all, the apron! Would that I were as fair to look upon as you, my pretty dear!"

"What folly," scoffed Joscelyn. "Let me hear no such belittling of yourself, Catalina. None could look more like to an angel than you in that pale blue taffetas, with your curls in a shower of pale gold about your neck."

Catalina's laughter pealed gaily as a chime of bells. "However wrong you may be," she said, "I'm glad you think it. But hark; I've pleasant news for both of us. Aunt Schuyler has promised me, as a reward for household tasks well done, that I may make holiday with my company in the forest, this day week; and you go too, Joscelyn. Will it not be gay? We start at sunrise, and return at dusk. You know our custom: we take baskets and needlework. 'Tis the boys' task to provide fish and game of their own hunting. We girls must find the berries. The rest of the food goes with us in hampers. You've never gone out with our company, Joscelyn. A rare treat it will be for you."

Joscelyn sighed. True enough, she had never before had opportunity to join in an outdoor excursion with one of those bands of young people, who, in a manner peculiar to the Albany of that day, formed themselves, from early childhood to young manhood and womanhood, into what they called companies, under a selected leader. Rarely was anyone not born in the town invited to be a guest at these festivities. Joscelyn, not an Albanian, was not eligible for membership therefore, although she had often longed to be. Now Catalina, who had recently been elected leader of one of these groups, had secured an invitation for her, and had hardly been able to await the arrival of her friend to impart to her what she was convinced would be welcome news.

"But why do you sigh, Joscelyn?" she asked in un-

feigned surprise. "Surely your parents will not forbid your going."

"Nay, 'tis not that," returned Joscelyn ruefully. "'Tis something different altogether. On that day I shall be far from you and them. My father has orders to go to Fort William Henry before the week ends."

"Fort William Henry!" exclaimed Catalina in dismay. "'Tis at a great distance! 'Tis, as I have heard, a prodigious hazardous post! Surely your father will never hearken to your going there with him, nor yet your mother." The girl's cheeks had paled at the very thought.

"Think you that we would remain behind?" cried Joscelyn indignantly. "Nay, that we would not, and so we have made my father to understand."

"Oh, if you go, how shall I do without you?" was Catalina's grieving cry. She could talk of naught else as she led her companion down the staircase to the drawing-room to make her curtsy before Madame Schuyler.



CHAPTER II



IN THE drawing-room of the Flatts a number of distinguished personages were assembled. Principal among these was Madame Schuyler herself, a matron of prominence, and unbounded influence in the life of Albany. Once a tall majestic beauty, still a benign and dignified, though corpulent presence, she had long been renowned for her wisdom, her learning, her benevolence, and plain good sense. Her knowledge of what was proper and becoming in all circumstances, joined to genuine kindness, and love of young people, and their joyous activities, won her the utmost deference, affectionate admiration, and respect. She was known to the older members of society as Madame, but to her youthful friends she was always Aunt Schuyler.

She was robed today in elegant lilac brocade, a falling whisk of Brussels lace about her shoulders, her luxuriant hair powdered and rolled back from her broad forehead.

At her right hand was Mistress Armstrong, her shining yellow locks and rose-leaf skin set off by her grey tissue gown, delicately sprigged with pink.

Looking beyond these two, Joscelyn saw, with his back to the unlighted hearth, a heavy figure, resplendent in scarlet and gold uniform. This was General Aber-

crombie, who was laying down his views in martinet fashion to General Sir William Johnson, who, dark of eye, bold featured, and forceful in manner, yet possessed of Irish suavity withal, held firmly to his own ideas.

Their host, Colonel Philip Schuyler, tall, and of not less distinguished presence than his companions, put in a gravely serene and weighty word now and again, quietly guiding the converse safely over the shoals of disagreement on Indian and military matters.

General Abercrombie, arrived from England as General Loudon's lieutenant one short year ago, had no such knowledge of American and especially Indian affairs as had the other two. Their experience had been long and intimate, and in the annals of the colonies, and indeed throughout all our country's history, none ever possessed such unbounded influence over the Five Nations of the Iroquois, nor earned their love, trust, and veneration as did Sir William Johnson. Colonel Philip Schuyler of the Flatts, known to the Indians as their Brother Philip, ranked only second to him in their regard. Joscelyn had often heard her father comment upon Johnson's remarkable power, and when later on, during the course of the dinner, and the passage of the afternoon, she caught snatches of conversation between them, and heard this newcomer give vent to obstinately self-opinionated statements, as to the proper management of certain delicate situations, she could not but be amazed that he should set himself up against these two men of outstanding knowledge and ability.

Among the other guests she espied a younger Philip Schuyler, favorite nephew of Colonel and Madame Schuyler, who was now a captain, but who was to be-

come in later years our own General Schuyler of Revolutionary fame. His young wife, before her marriage called "sweet Kitty Van Renssalaer," was at his side. These, together with a sprinkling of relatives, and several British and provincial officers, made up the invited guests, fifteen or more in all. Seldom did a less number sit down to this hospitable board at any time.

In spite of Madame Schuyler's Dutch ancestry, she followed the English fashions, and dinner at the Flatts was always served at two o'clock, instead of at twelve, as was the practice among her neighbors.

It was not customary in that decorous era for young persons to join uninvited in the conversation of their elders, even among the Dutch, who granted their children much greater freedom than was usual among the English or the French. Therefore, Joscelyn and Catalina, seated side by side at the bounteous board, held their nimble tongues in leash until the meal was over.

That their presence was not unnoticed by the distinguished guests, they knew well, however, for had not their sharp young ears caught General Abercrombie's question, uttered in an undertone to his host, "Who's the dark little beauty, beside your pretty niece, Colonel Schuyler?" and General Johnson's comment, in somewhat louder voice, "A shame to hide a maid like that at Fort William Henry, General Abercrombie. Faith, I'm wondering that you're willing to be responsible for it at all, at all." He had thrown a twinkle of his black eyes at Joscelyn as he glimpsed her blushing confusion, and knew that she had heard.

Once the repast was over, Catalina and Joscelyn found a secluded corner of the drawing-room, and there,

with the approaching separation still uppermost in their minds, spoke unrestrainedly.

"This you must promise, that you will write me whenever you can find messenger," begged Catalina earnestly, twining her fingers in those of her friend.

"Truly I will," promised Joscelyn unhesitatingly, "and you must do likewise, Catalina."

"If only there were a post," sighed Catalina, "but even then it would be a month at least ere I could hear from you, and that would be a weary time to wait."

"Perchance," suggested Joselyn, "some kind officer, some ranger, or wagoner, coming or going, might bring letter or word from one of us to the other. None goes north to the fort, nor passes south from it to Albany, but must pass the Flatts, and you know how oft they tarry here upon your Uncle Philip's common. Never fear, Catalina. In some way we shall contrive it."

While the two girls talked on, Madame Schuyler regarded them thoughtfully from her place upon the tapestried sofa. Mistress Armstrong had been giving the news to her of the orders that her husband had received, and of the nearness of their departure. She laid a shapely hand upon that of her companion, and fell silent, as though she were occupied in considering some subject of the utmost consequence.

The hum of conversation went on around her, as she sat thus, buried in thought, and Mistress Armstrong, guessing nothing of what was passing in her mind, and suspecting that it was something of genuine importance, did not break in upon her.

At length Madame Schuyler leaned to her, with the look of one who has finally come to a definite decision.

"Mistress Armstrong," she began, "'tis needless to remind you of the dangers that may await you at your husband's new post. That you should ardently desire to be with him there I can well understand, for in so doing you follow the call of wifely inclination, and affection, as well as of duty. You could do no less. But this sweet child of yours? Consider: would it not be well to leave her under my roof and protection during your absence? Here she would receive such training in housewifely arts and social graces as befits a young maid of her station. The training of her mind shall not be neglected. Doubtless she will be content in the company of our Catalina, whom you know she holds especially dear, and I need not assure you that she would receive the same careful oversight as I give to my own niece."

Elizabeth Armstrong, taken by surprise, cast a glance of troubled inquiry at her husband, who was near enough to overhear Madame Schuyler's offer. Both were well aware of the signal advantage of a residence under the supervision of this wise and good woman. None lived better qualified than she to prepare young folk for the responsibilities as well as the social pleasures of life. Childless herself, it had long been her custom to take into her household for a season two, or even three or more children of relatives or friends whose parents were absent on patriotic duty, or who were orphaned, or who, for one reason or another, would be benefitted by a stay with her. This was a privilege which many eagerly sought after, but Madame Schuyler always made her own selections, and reigned supreme in the hearts of her

young charges, as would a much beloved and honored sovereign in a miniature court.

The benefit conferred upon Joscelyn would be inestimable, but dearly as she loved her Aunt Schuyler, and Catalina, would she be willing to be left behind, and if so, and this brought to both parents a sharp pang, how could they, themselves, bear even temporary separation from their only child, their well-loved maid?

Captain Armstrong returned his wife's questioning glance gravely, and without speaking, but she, reading his thoughts, knew that, at whatever cost to himself, he was ready to abide by her decision. It was as though she could not make it.

Her eyes traveled to where Joscelyn and Catalina sat in their sequestered corner, deep in talk, and her indecision grew, trying as she did, with unselfish solicitude, to weigh this peaceful ordered life at the Schuyler mansion, with its refinements, its opportunities, its ennobling influences toward everything that was womanly and right, against the crude environment, the overhanging perils, the restrictions upon the normal joyous activities of youth that this frontier fort promised.

Ralph Armstrong, on his side, thought of the loneliness that his wife must endure on those occasions when he should be called away from the fort on any expedition, and what solace she would then find in Joscelyn. Still he said no word.

Madame Schuyler, realizing how much was involved for them all, waited patiently, and at last Mistress Armstrong gave her answer. "After all," she said low, "'tis Joscelyn who is most concerned. Shall we not ask her, Ralph, what would be her own wish?"

Captain Armstrong bowed his head in acquiescence.

Madame Schuyler viewed the two with extreme astonishment. In that earlier day it was well-nigh unheard of that a young person's opinion should be asked in the making of any decision, and especially one of such importance. And yet, she reflected, Joscelyn was no ordinary maid. It would do no harm to hear, at least, what she would say. In the end she could perhaps be led to see what would be best for her.

Catching Joscelyn's eye, she beckoned to her smilingly, and the girl came, close followed by Catalina.

"Joscelyn, my child," began Madame Schuyler, making a place for her upon the sofa, "I have asked your good father and mother to leave you here with me while they are away at Fort William Henry. It would please you to stay with Catalina, would it not?"

Before Joscelyn had time to reply, Catalina burst into delighted exclamation: "We shall not be apart then, after all!" for she took it for granted that her aunt's invitation would not be refused.

Joscelyn, taken as utterly by surprise as her parents had been, could not respond on the instant, but recovering herself presently, shook her head. "Nay," she said firmly, "I thank you, Aunt Schuyler, for your goodness. 'Twould be sweet to stay with you and Catalina, but I go with my parents."

Catalina gave a cry of disappointment, and threw her arms entreatingly about her friend. "Wilt thou not stay with us, Joscelyn?" she pleaded. "Surely your father and mother will consent, and Aunt and I so much wish it."

Again Joscelyn shook her head. "Nay, that I must

not," she repeated. "I should pine sorely for my parents, and they might, perhaps, have need of me, at times." Her loving glance stole from one to the other of them, as though beseeching that they would uphold her in her choice.

"Child," came the voice of Madame Schuyler in warning, "you must remember that Fort William Henry is a post exposed to attack at almost any moment by the enemy."

Joscelyn lifted her head proudly.

"Am I not a daughter of the forts," she asked, "a soldier's lass? And shall I not follow my father and my mother wherever duty to their country summons them?"

Then, not unmindful of all that had been so generously offered to her by Madame Schuyler for her advantage, she stretched impulsive hands to her. "Oh, dear Aunt Schuyler," she cried low, "you will not think me ungrateful, you, who are so wise and kind! Doubtless you understand how it is with me!"

Madame Schuyler, dignified and serene, as was her wont, looked into the flushed countenance of the girl, and drawing her to her, kissed her upon the forehead, a rare mark of approval and affection from this great dame. "You are over-young to make your own decisions, Joscelyn," she gave brief answer, "but you have chosen nobly."

CHAPTER III



THE short time remaining before her departure was filled to the brim for Joscelyn, with a multitude of duties. There was the aid that she must give to her mother in packing the family belongings in hair trunks, boxes, and portmanteaux. There was the bidding good-by, also, to those friends who, although less dear to her by far than Catalina, were nevertheless hard to leave.

It was the afternoon of June fifteenth, in the year 1757. At sunrise of the following day, the start was to be made, and under convoy of the company of provincial troops commanded by Captain Armstrong, there would go a wagon-train, laden with ammunition and supplies for Fort William Henry.

In order that his wife and daughter might travel with as little discomfort as possible, Captain Armstrong had sent to his farm near Schenectady, for his best farm wagon, for their accommodation on the journey.

This had not yet arrived when Joscelyn, her last task completed, and herself arrayed in her coolest muslin dress, with a large white fichu of sheerest lawn about her neck, tied the broad blue ribbons of her sunshade under her chin, and betook herself down the hill of Prince Street, and so into Market Street, to make her brief visits of farewell.

Her father, meanwhile, believing that all arrangements for the journey had been satisfactorily made, was

about to leave the office of his commandant, to go to his own quarters, when a sergeant was admitted, with a message for his superior officer, to the effect that the Dutch farmers, who had promised to supply wagons for the train, had at this late hour played false, and had hidden the horses, and half of the necessary complement of wheels for the wagons.

Captain Armstrong heard him through, and then went at once to the commandant, to ask for a detail of men to go in search of the missing horses and wheels.

"Here's a pretty how-de-do, sir," he reported. "Not a horse to be found, nor a wagon with all its wheels. These niggardly Dutch farmers have concealed them, and refuse to tell where they are."

"A serious complication," scowled the commandant. "They must be forced to produce them."

"These Dutch are most astonishing obstinate," replied Captain Armstrong, with a dubious shake of the head. "Listen to reason they will not. There's naught else to do but to send out a detail of our provincials to make diligent search, and if neither horses nor wheels are found before nightfall, we shall be driven to impress others in a different quarter."

"Always ready, the Dutch, to accept our military protection in time of threatening danger," retorted the commandant in disgust, "but never willing to help us meet the expense of it. If we succeed in preventing the French from descending upon and taking Albany, 'twill not be because of any willing co-operation with us of the Dutchmen."

"Our men had best not continue their search too long," went on Armstrong, returning to the main point,

“or the rest of the farmers hereabouts will have time to take warning, and to prevent us from supplying our lack from them.”

Knowing nothing of what had arisen to cause anxiety to her father, Joscelyn made her farewell visits with some despatch, and finding the sun not yet near its setting, she bent away from streets and houses, and threaded a footpath that led along the bank of the Hudson, and ended among pleasant meadows.

She crossed the meadow, and going straight through the sunlit grove beyond it, went down a sloping bank, and along a narrow trail to an osier thicket. Few ever passed through this, for there was naught beyond it of interest to the pedestrian, but a bit of picturesque marshy beach, and a small land-locked cove, never used for anchorage, since there was many a better and more convenient mooring-place along the river itself. But it was pleasing to Joscelyn because of its remoteness, and for its quiet beauty. Many a happy hour she had spent dreaming upon this beach, in a little world of her own imaginings.

It was a safe enough retreat, she had found, for none but friendly Iroquois, or such among the Caughnawagas as were apparently bound solely upon peaceful errands visited Albany.

Slipping confidently through the osiers, therefore, Joscelyn stepped out upon the secluded beach, prepared to enjoy a last half hour there. But a low exclamation of astonishment burst from her, for she was confronted by a most unexpected sight, and one which showed her pretty nook to be untenable for her today.

Tethered among the coarse reeds, a dozen or more

sturdy farm-horses munched oats from their nose-bags, and close to the shore, and securely fastened to stakes of green hickory and oak, lay a group of enormous rafts, piled high with hay.

Seated upon the beach, keeping watch over them, was a powerfully built Dutchman, a musket laid across his knees. Joscelyn recognized him as Bartholomew Vroom, one of the neighboring farmers, whom she had frequently heard mentioned as being especially penurious, and unwilling to contribute anything toward the expenses of maintaining a fort and proper defenses for Albany.

She turned ruefully away, to retrace her steps, as quietly as might be, but the Dutchman had seen her, and scrambling hastily to his feet, covered her with his weapon. He came toward her, his finger upon the trigger, and Joscelyn, not daring to stir from where she was lest he should fire, presently found her only avenue of escape cut off.

"You vill sit down, my mees, and make me no noises," growled Bartholomew, his musket leveled at her breast, "else vill I shoot you, maybe, and dot makes you so quiet enough."

Joscelyn drew herself up. "You speak insolently, Bartholomew Vroom," she declared haughtily. "Methinks I have the same right to come and go here as yourself."

"So, yes," sneered Vroom, "ven nodings here is. Come, go, so much you like. It makes nodings to me. But dis day you could too much tales bring by your fader, and dot fort-mis-mister. I keep you here, vere I see you, dot ve not haf to gif up horses and vagons for travellings, vot ve don't vant to gif."

His words revealed to Joscelyn the significance of the situation which she had unwittingly stumbled upon. Here, without doubt, were the horses which her father was counting upon for the wagon-train that was to start on the morrow. What the rafts contained she could only surmise, but surely those mountains of hay concealed something of importance.

By his threatening manner, as well as by his words, she was convinced that Bartholomew Vroom meant to keep her here upon this lonely beach until he could in some way manage to have the horses and rafts conveyed to another hiding-place. It was not unlikely that he expected some of his fellow farmers to come under cover of night to relieve him in his watch, and then the removal could be accomplished.

Should he compel her to remain until darkness fell, it would render all the more difficult her father's task of finding the lost at this point, of tracing them to their new place of concealment, or of obtaining other supplies at the last moment.

Joscelyn was not lacking in presence of mind. Menaced by Bartholomew's musket, she sank down mechanically upon the beach, not so much in docile yielding to his rough commands, as he believed, but that she might have time to gather her wits in order to cope with this crucial situation. Her own predicament was serious enough, but her father's was much more so, and as she thought of both, a vivid picture arose before her mind of her mother's anxiety over her delayed return.

Vroom, finding himself obeyed, settled back into his original attitude, and taking out his pipe, began to smoke, in stolid indifference to her plight.

Looking him over through half-closed eyes, Joscelyn wondered whether he would dare to carry out his threat, and shoot her down, if she should prove rebellious. That he would unquestionably treat her roughly, she knew by the grim set of his jaw, and in that case she would be as a reed in his hands, nor was she fleet enough of foot to outstrip him should she try to run from him. Remote as the osier beach seemed, she reflected, it was not actually far, in a direct line, from the King's Highway. Might not some passerby hear her, perhaps, if she should call?

She was too wise, however, to risk making an outcry while the cold muzzle of Vroom's musket was in position to be lifted, and pointed at her. Something she must do to compel him to drop his weapon, and to engage his hands, and all his attention. But what? Puzzle over it as she might, no inspiration came to her.

When she had almost given up in despair, suddenly, in a flash, she knew.

As though, on this sultry day, the warmth of the large crisply starched fichu about her neck oppressed her, she deliberately untied its knot, and slowly drew it off. Before Bartholomew Vroom could suspect her purpose, she had sprung to her feet, and snapped its crackling folds directly at the eyes of the nearest horse. With a terrified snort, he plunged, and in an instant the hitherto quiet beach became the scene of a wild uproar. Frightened whinnying horses broke from their tethers, and a stampede was imminent.

Black with rage, and swearing roundly, Bartholomew Vroom dropped pipe and musket, and rushed frantically



By a swift protecting gesture he swept Joscelyn into safety



hither and thither, snatching at the tossing bridles, in an effort to restrain and calm the terror-stricken animals.

"Vorklikker," he hissed at Joscelyn, with an oath, but Joscelyn cared naught for his vituperations. She bounded like a deer out of the way of the thunderous menacing hoofs, and away toward the thicket, shrieking loudly for help as she ran.

On the King's Highway a little band of provincials, returning discouraged from an unsuccessful search, heard her screams, and turned into the wood at a double quick to bring rescue.

A young ranger, whom Captain Armstrong had sent out with the search party, reached her first. Joscelyn recognized him as Hugh Kennedy, arrived early that same day from General Sir William Johnson, bearing high recommendations from him to the commandant's good graces, and the request that he be permitted to travel with Captain Armstrong's company to Fort William Henry. Tall, lithe, active, clad in the buckskin garb of a woodsman, he was more youth than man, though he bore himself with an air of experience and hardy strength.

By a swift protecting gesture he swept Joscelyn into safety behind him.

"The horses of the Dutch are there!" she called after him, breathlessly, as he rushed out upon the beach, followed by the provincials.

A shrill whistle of delight burst from them all.

"We've found 'em, sure enough, thanks to the Captain's daughter," shouted one, with a guffaw of triumphant laughter, "and look you at yon bales of hay. What's there, d'ye think?"

"Wagon wheels hid under 'em, no doubt," suggested Kennedy.

Batholomew Vroom stamped his feet in helpless rage. Here he was, covered back and front by loaded muskets, forced to look on helplessly, while one of the soldiers strode to the nearest raft and thrust his bayonet into the hay.

"Wagon wheels!" yelled the soldier in joyous confirmation, clapping a huge hand upon his thigh.

The horses, under the skilful management of the men at their bridles, were growing docile, and Sergeant Enfield, in command of the provincials, stationing part of his men to guard the wagon wheels, that had been discovered piled one upon another under the heaps of new-mown hay, until he could send a detail of men to roll them to the fort, marched off, in high elation, with the remainder of the provincials, leading the animals which they had sought so long and vainly, and but for Joscelyn, would not have found.

His pig-eyes darting fire, his furious tongue restrained only by the fire-arm dangerously close to his ribs, Bartholomew Vroom went with them perforce.

Home through the woods to Fort Frederick hurried Joscelyn, under safe conduct of Hugh Kennedy, silent after her first exclamations of gratitude for her deliverance, and eager to reach and reassure her mother.

Mistress Armstrong, who had been in a flutter of anxiety at her continued absence, had had time to recover her serenity before the missing wheels, a man to each one, came rolling into the fort enclosure, where the wagons now stood waiting.

Joscelyn, at her post by the window, watching their entry, felt a strong hand laid on her shoulder, and her father's voice rang in her ear in hearty pride and commendation. "A soldier's lass, you are, Joscelyn, my girl. 'Tis a good service you did for us this day."



CHAPTER IV



THERE had been curses, and shouts of rage from the Dutch farmers, when they learned from the irate Vroom that their property had been captured by the soldiers from the cove among the willows, but in spite of that, the long delayed task of loading the wagons was now rapidly going forward.

Joscelyn, recovered from the excitement of her recent adventure, and still tingling with pleasure over the praise that her father had bestowed upon her, was standing at his side, near the barracks door, following with unflagging interest the movements of the men, who were growing almost spectral in the gathering dusk, as they stowed into the vehicles kegs of powder and shot, barrels and boxes of stores, tents, and such other paraphernalia of every description as might be needed for night encampments.

The moon would not rise for another hour. Lanterns had begun to flash like glow-worms in the gloom, when a solitary farm-wagon entered the yard, and came to a stand at a point somewhat withdrawn from the bustle and confusion of loading.

Descrying it, Joscelyn queried, "Is not that our own wagon, father, come from Schenectady?"

"Ay, and glad enough I am to see it," replied the

Captain, for he had expected it some hours earlier, and had begun to be concerned at its non-appearance. "It does not please me, however," he commented, "to see Ambrose Jenkins driving, when I had looked for Nathan Bartlett."

Joscelyn looked up at her father inquiringly. "Think you that Jenkins may prove untrustworthy?"

"I've had little to do with him, and I'm not sure," returned Captain Armstrong. "He's a redemptioner, got from Captain Griffith, for payment of his passage money, on the advice of Coles, my farmer, who saw him aboard the Dover from London, when she docked at Murray's Wharf in New York, last autumn. Coles had need of another farm-hand, and he thought this man looked a strong fellow. For this journey, I preferred Bartlett, whom I know well, and trust thoroughly."

Leaving his daughter, Captain Armstrong strode over to Jenkins, who had thrown the reins about the whipstock, and was dismounting from the high wagon-seat.

"Jenkins," he greeted him, "how is it that you've come in place of Bartlett?"

The redemptioner, a man of lean features, and wiry though athletic build, reached the ground, and turned to his master with ready answer.

"The haying was on, sir, and Coles didn't see his way to spare him, for he's a much better hand at the haying than me, though I'm good enough with horses. So he's sent me, with his duty, sir, hoping you won't mind the change."

Seeing the force of Coles' reason, Captain Armstrong resigned himself. "Put up your horses, then, and see

that you are stirring early to-morrow to load my family baggage for the start at sunrise."

He was about to leave him, when the redemptioner asked, "If't please you, sir, I'd like to be give permission to go into the town for an hour, after the horses is baited, to see a fellow as I got acquaint with aboard the Dover."

"There's no objection. Follow me to the officer of the guard, and he'll give you the sign and countersign for the night, so that you'll be able to re-enter the sally-port when you get back."

A half-hour later, the pass-word having been obtained, and his horses comfortably munching in their stalls, Jenkins departed from the fort.

Close to where Prince Street, sloping steeply away from Fort Frederick, met Market Street near the bank of the Hudson River, stood the house of Philip Lyddius, Dutch fur-trader of Albany, in the year 1757.

Its high-peaked corbel-edged roof, its substantial walls of black and red Holland brick, its windows and bull's eyes of thick greenish glass, its wide door divided horizontally in the centre, made it no more pretentious than many of its neighbors.

On this summer evening its front door was swung wide open to admit air and coolness from the river into the low-ceiled room beyond, for the heat remained intense. There were no candles lighted.

Upon the broad wooden bench outside the door sat Philip Lyddius, smoking his long-stemmed pipe with as serene and peaceful an aspect as though none but the most harmless activities ever engaged him. His short gross bulk filled the bench. The dim light, filtering

through the vine-covered trellis above and around him, was not sufficient to display clearly the fine texture of his murry colored broadcloth coat and small-clothes, the rich hues of his flowered red and yellow satin waist-coat, the sheer lawn of his ruffled shirt. Set convenient to his reach was his tobacco jar, and a small brazen comfortier, filled with live coals for the lighting of his pipe.

Heavy of feature, stolid of gaze, his cool slow-moving eyes, bespoke him to the casual observer as nothing more than a shrewd and ordinarily prosperous Dutch trader. There were those, however, at the head of affairs in the province of New York, who were convinced that he was possessed of far greater wealth than he could have come by even in the sharp and lucrative dealings of the fur-trade.

They mentioned the handsome furnishings of his best room, the numerous and massive silver tankards, decanters, and chased cups upon the open shelves of his French nut-wood cupboard, the many silver spoons, and forks, the purslin and Delft tableware that lined his oaken wall-racks, instead of the pewter and red Portugese ware that, for the most part, filled those of his neighbors.

They cited, also, the sumptuous silks and satins, and jewels, beyond their station, that his two daughters flaunted on occasion.

In short, it was suspected, although proof was not yet forthcoming, that this man, Lyddius, was the principal channel through which treasonable and valuable information, was constantly filtering through to Chevalier de Vaudreuil, French Governor of Canada, and his

generals, concerning the plans and activities of the English, and their Indian allies, the Five Nations of the Iroquois.

Moreover, Sir William Johnson, loyal patriot, and sole Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the British Crown, had within the last few days received a letter from Lord Loudon, Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Forces in the Colonies, requesting him to watch, and apprehend, if possible, two men in Johnson's own employ, living in Schenectady, and apparently loyal, Du Quayne, and La Force, by name, who were secretly confederates of Lyddius, in the interests of the French.

Lord Loudon's warning was not without reason, for at this moment, Lyddius, puffing in apparent tranquillity at his pipe, was expecting a messenger from these agents of his in the Mohawk Valley. This messenger, now two days overdue, was well-known to the trader, as one who might be depended upon, and the delay in his appearance made him not a little anxious, lest by some mischance emissary and secret papers alike had been seized.

Looking fixedly in the direction from which this messenger must come, he observed a foot-passenger approaching, in the home-spun garments of a farm-hand, with a rusty castor hat drawn low over his brows. The man, who was a stranger to him, came rapidly, giving no heed to the houses along his way, until he was almost directly opposite the trader's. There he paused, and raised his eyes furtively to the model of a sloop under full sail, showing dimly upon the house wall near to the gable.

As though this assured him that he had reached the

place to which his business called him, he came straight to Lyddius.

Standing in front of him, he stroked himself slowly twice across the lips with a thin fore-finger, and by this simple action the trader was made aware that the man had come to him upon a secret mission from his agents.

Without a word spoken between them, Lyddius elevated his heaving bulk from the bench, rapped the ashes sharply from his pipe, and taking up tobacco-jar and comfortier in his fat hands, led the stranger into his dwelling. Here, setting down his burdens, he closed and barred the door.

While Lyddius was taking this precaution, his daughter, apprized by the rapping of her father's pipe that the messenger whom he had been expecting had at last arrived, silently entered the best room from the kitchen, and drew the rich crimson damask curtains tightly across the windows. She brought in a massive silver candlestick with lighted candle, and set it upon the polished mahogany table that occupied the centre of the room.

Leaving unlighted the wax tapers in the silver blekkers upon the wall on either side of the great tiled mantel-piece, she withdrew as noiselessly as she had come.

The hard eyes of the stranger followed her movements from under his hat-brim, until her buxom form, in its gayly striped purple and scarlet skirt, its pale blue bodice, and sheer white sleeves had disappeared through the door. When it had closed behind her, he took off his hat, and Ambrose Jenkins, the redemptioner, stood revealed.

Drawing out the plug from the powder horn at his side, he extracted from within a small folded paper, which he silently offered to Lyddius.

"This comes behind the time," commented the fur-trader curtly, taking it from him, and drawing nearer to the table and the candle-light.

"The usual messenger was seized with sudden distemper," explained Jenkins, seating himself in the tall leather-backed nail-studded chair to which Lyddius waved him.

The Dutchman dropped into its counterpart, and opened the paper which he had received. He scanned rapidly the intelligence in cipher that it contained, and then shot a scrutinizing glance from over the unfolded sheets at the speaker, for the language and intonations of the redemptioner seemed to evince more of education than might be looked for in one of his humble station.

"Your name, it is vat?" he demanded.

"Ambrose Jenkins, redemptioner," was the prompt reply. "Servant upon the farm at Schenectady belonging to Captain Ralph Armstrong. This, until my passage is redeemed. Yet none the less, because of that," he went on with a significant smile, "a reliable agent for any delicate commissions which you may wish me to execute for you in your profitable little transactions with Monsieur de Vaudreuil."

Lyddius was a judge of men. His coldly appraising eye passed for the second time over the countenance of the redemptioner. Beneath the outward seeming of this emissary, he discerned that he would find in him an instrument sufficiently pliant and unscrupulous for the working out of any evil purpose, and of a grade of

intelligence that might make him a better messenger on important missions than the one who had been unseasonably taken with the distemper. He laid down the cipher, and leaned forward in his chair. "My friend," he began smoothly, "it is unfortunate a little that you are to a farm bound up. You could the more of use to me be if it is not so."

"Farming is not vastly to my taste," vouchsafed Jenkins with a shrug, "but for the present it provides safe cover, especially for your agents."

"So-o-o," murmured Lyddius, and his voice had the purring note of a satisfied cat, "That is good. Then we shall find some profitable commissions for you. But how is it, my friend, that you, who are redemptioner, are at Albany here, instead of by your farm work?"

"I go to-morrow with the wagon-train to Fort William Henry, to drive the wagon containing my master's family."

The fishy eyes of Lyddius lighted up. "To Fort William Henry," he repeated, reflectively. "That gives good opportunity."

"I shall improve it," was the laconic answer.

"And if on the journey you are able some troubles to stir up for the English among these wagon-men," suggested Lyddius, "Monsieur de Vaudreuil will for such a service make you some rewards."

"Whatever is possible, I will do," rejoined Jenkins curtly.

"Remember, the sign of the lips makes the friends of me and of Monsieur de Vaudreuil to know you everywhere," the trader informed him.

"So Du Quayne has told me."

The redemptioner rose to go, but Lyddius made a movement to detain him. "Hist!" he said, in an undertone, as from a sycamore tree at the side of the house floated the mournful cry of an owl.

"You hear?" inquired Lyddius.

"Naught but an owl," was Jenkins' indifferent answer.

"An owl, yes," laughed the Dutchman. "Hooting Owl, the Caughnawaga. By his road-belts he comes trading to Albany. He brings back to Monsieur de Vaudreuil this cipher for me. The owl hoot his sign is. When that noise you hear, look for him out. If something you have for the Frenchmens, you can it safely to him give."

He rose, and Jenkins followed him to the door.

Lyddius cautiously extinguished the candle, unbarred the door, and the redemptioner passed out into the street.

But when he had gone a stone's throw beyond the house, he paused in the shadow, and cast a glance behind him at the sycamore tree. From the shelter of its trunk he saw the naked figure of an Indian glide toward the dwelling of the trader, and into the narrow opening in the doorway that had given himself egress.

The door closed softly after Hooting Owl, and the redemptioner turning out of Market Street, mounted the hill of Prince Street toward the moon-silvered walls of Fort Frederick.

Great Carrying Place, instead of taking, as they must, the long rough road inland from Stillwater by way of the healing springs of Saratoga.

Leading the troops went Ensign Brown, and a section of the men. Following these came the sergeant wagon-master and a long line of dust-stirring crawling wagons. Behind these marched Captain Armstrong at the head of the main body of his company, and directly after rumbled the farm-wagon containing Joscelyn and her mother. A squad of the Captain's most reliable men brought up the rear.

Because the main body of his troops was between himself and his family, and that he would see little of his wife and daughter except at mess and night encampments, Captain Armstrong had appointed Hugh Kennedy to march beside them as special escort.

This pleased Joscelyn vastly, for besides the prospect that it gave her of young companionship, she regarded Hugh, as her rescuer from the rude clutches of Bartholomew Vroom, with grateful admiration, although it is safe to say that had she not been thus indebted to him, he would nevertheless have captured her liking instantly by his vigorous manliness, and frank honesty.

In presenting Kennedy to his wife and daughter that morning to be their guardian, the Captain had said, "He can give you scouting tales, Joscelyn, to beguile the way, that will make your adventure among the osiers seem as naught."

Joscelyn had laughed, and vowed that it would greatly please her to hear them.

But her mind and heart were elsewhere as they wound slowly past the Flatts, for there Catalina Cuyler, lean-

ing from a casement window of the mansion waved her a tearful farewell, and Joscelyn, raising it high that her friend might see her act, kissed a locket that was suspended upon the slender gold chain that hung always about her neck. Catalina had placed the locket there on the last day that they had spent together, saying, "You must wear this for my sake, dearest. Promise that you will." And Joscelyn had vowed, "Truly I will, Catalina. It shall never leave me."

At the outermost edge of Colonel Schuyler's orchard, Bright Waters, a Mohawk maid, whose affection for the Captain's daughter was as warm as Catalina's own, stood with uplifted hands, calling down the blessing of the Great Spirit upon the journeyings of her pale-face friend.

Hugh, seeing Joscelyn's emotion, waited until her countenance had cleared before he began his narrations, and when that time came she lent him a willing ear.

For *divertissement* she had more than tales of scouting adventures, however. The new scenes through which she was moving claimed her quick interest. The swift flowing river, the cool green of the woodlands charmed and refreshed her. Once they had left Stillwater behind, the road ran through primeval forests, across rolling country, over hills and mountains, through upland valleys. Nowhere was there any sign of human habitation.

The heavy jolting over an uneven road, in a wagon without springs, fatiguing almost beyond endurance to Mistress Armstrong, troubled Joscelyn not a whit. Her elastic spirits never flagged, her vigorous young frame

rose above every discomfort, and her only regret was for the friends she had left behind.

Scattered rays of sunlight sifted through, and touched the enormous trunks and fallen needles of the evergreens to a purple-red glory, and made more dove-like the grey of smooth columns of tall beeches.

Except for the sound of the passing of the wagon-train, and its guarding company of provincials, nothing broke the profound stillness but the call of bird, gurgle of running water, or chatter of squirrel.

Whether they journeyed by day, or camped by night, with tents raised, and fires kindled to cook the evening meal and hold off prowling wolf or wildcat, Joscelyn felt no fear, although she knew that every mile that took her farther from her old haunts brought her nearer to where at any time they might encounter bands of hostile Indians, or reconnoitring parties of French. It added to her sense of security that always by the side of the moving wagon strode Hugh Kennedy, musket on shoulder, and his converse with her lightened many an hour.

Though Joscelyn went care-free, it was not so with her father. From the beginning, the wagoners had been surly, seizing every pretext for grumbling, and insubordinate behavior. Now it would be the roughness of the road that called forth their ill-humor; again their rations were not to their liking; and always they mumbled discontent over the scanty measure of rum dealt out to them; until Captain Armstrong, his patience more and more sorely tried, desired nothing so much as the sight of the walls of Fort William Henry, that he might be rid, once and for all, of them and their rebelliousness.

In striking contrast to the conduct of the wagoners was that of Ambrose Jenkins. Bolt upright upon the wagon-seat, skilful with the reins, he was also solicitous of the comfort of Mistress Armstrong and her daughter. He was so cheerful and respectful under every trying circumstance, that Captain Armstrong more than once congratulated himself that he had had the wisdom to provide his own conveyance for his family, and his own driver.

For some reason or other, however, although Jenkins appeared to have no part in their discontent, he was extremely popular with his fellow wagoners. A central place was unvaryingly reserved for him at their camp-fire, and many a sally of his called forth their uproarious mirth. Oddly enough, after every quiet and seemingly unusually peaceful gathering about the evening fire, on the following day the wagoners were more morose, and insolently obstreperous than before.

On the fifth morning, as the train resumed the journey, a blanket of dense fog hung over all the landscape. Fifty feet of distance in any direction was sufficient to blot out every object beyond. Only the measured tramp of soldiery, creaking hubs, and rumbling wheels, and plodding footfalls of horses, enabled Joscelyn to detect from her seat in their own wagon that the entire company was in motion.

"Were it not for the plainness of this single wagon-track," she opined to Hugh Kennedy, wrapping herself more closely in her blue camlet cloak to shut out the damp, "we might easily wander out of way."

"And that befel," he returned gravely, "we might

come to fatal disaster, there being many a hidden precipice and rock-sewn ravine hereabouts."

Mistress Armstrong shuddered, for she was, by now, much unstrung by the toilsomeness of the journey. "If only we come in safety to the fort," murmured she, looking apprehensively about her.

The redemptioner, his kersey-clad back to them, his head set toward his horses, permitted himself a flickering and sardonic smile.

They had not gone above an hour's march in this obscurity, when the column was halted, and word sent back from Ensign Brown in front to Captain Armstrong, that a bridge had been reached whose strength he greatly doubted.

Instantly the Captain galloped past the wagons to the front to inspect the bridge. Arrived there, and finding that the necessary repairs would take the force under Ensign Brown too long a time, he despatched a runner, to bring up his main body to assist.

He had not been engaged there in directing the strengthening of the bridge more than a few moments, when Joscelyn's quick ear detected a sound as of wagons being hastily unloaded.

"Hark!" she said, her hand lifted to arrest the attention of her companions, "What is happening, think you, back yonder in the fog?"

The redemptioner sat rigid. Listening with the rest, he was hoping that a plan, concocted long since between himself and the wagoners, and held in abeyance only until fog or road conditions offered opportunity for its successful carrying out, was now in operation. He hoped, too, that Joscelyn, whom he was inly cursing as

an officious wench, might not have given the warning in time to prevent them from some measure of success.

Hugh Kennedy, familiar with the treacheries that unwilling wagoners often practised, was swift to take alarm, and sent word forward to Captain Armstrong that he believed that the wagoners, under cover of the fog, were throwing away the stores, and preparing to take their departure for Albany.

His suspicions proved only too correct, for Captain Armstrong, returning to the rear with such despatch and caution that he swooped down upon the wagoners without warning, found that dozens of heavy barrels and casks filled with precious ammunition, had already been dumped unceremoniously into the bushes. Boxes and hogsheads of provisions and miscellaneous stores were following in rapid succession.

Before the mutineers could put themselves into an attitude of defiance, they found themselves confronted by an indignant officer, and surrounded by his provincials, whose bristling bayonets, and determined attitude promised no quarter for the guilty.

Knowing themselves to be without other weapons than their own fists could provide, the wagoners met Captain Armstrong's flashing eyes with ugly scowls and muttered oaths.

"One word more, and you taste shot," rapped out the Captain. "You've thought to do traitors' work under cover of the fog, but thanks to my daughter's ears, and the quick wit of the scout, Hugh Kennedy, we've caught you at it in time."

For reply frowns grew blacker, though insolent speech ceased, and in the silence that followed his threat, the

Captain continued austere, "You richly deserve to be lined up, and shot where you stand, but the contents of these wagons are for Fort William Henry, and we must have wagoners to take them there. Thither they will go. Punishment is to be escaped in but one way. Reload instantly."

The wagoners looked at their ringleader and hesitated.

He stepped forward, and his bearing was impudent. "Promise what we ask, first," he spat out. "Better rations, more rum, better pay when the journey's done."

"I promise nothing," was the determined answer. "Your pay is fair, your rations good and abundant. It is such as is provided for all wagon-trains. You already have more rum, apparently, than is good for you. There'll be no increase. Reload."

Still the wagoners hesitated, and the ringleader, feet apart, and arms akimbo, stood face to face with the Captain, as before.

Captain Armstrong turned to the nearest provincial, and his command rang out sternly. "Seize this man," pointing to the ringleader, "Put a rope around his neck, and throw it over the limb of that oak-tree. If the other men don't get to work immediately, string him up."

It was enough. The ringleader, finding himself in the position of being hung at any second, promptly subsided. The menacing steel points of the bayonets levelled at them filled the remaining wagoners with terror. In feverish haste they began to snatch up all that had been cast summarily away, and to restore it to the wagons.

Not for an instant did Captain Armstrong and his men relax their vigilance, nor permit the work to flag.

When the last article had been replaced, a provincial with loaded musket was stationed upon the driver's seat, with orders to fire at once upon the driver, at the faintest sign of insubordination.

In sulky silence the drivers took their seats, and waited the signal for departure.

Having received word from the front that the bridge was now repaired, the Captain gave the order to resume the march, and the wagon-train went forward again under the lifting fog.

The redemptioner, seething inwardly over the balking of his plot, was nevertheless careful to conceal that he had had any agency in the recent disturbance, and made a point of keeping aloof from the other wagoners during the remainder of the journey. He was even more solicitous than before of the comfort of Mistress Armstrong and Joscelyn. Near noon of the tenth day they crossed a low rocky hill on which was set the entrenched camp belonging to Fort William Henry. Here the main body of the garrison greeted their arrival with hearty cheers and salutes, and cast knowing winks at one another at sight of the wagoners traveling under guard.

"Yonder is the fort at last!" exclaimed Joscelyn excitedly, "There, mother, there! Among the trees on the edge of the bluff!"

Mistress Armstrong, following her pointing finger, descried the square fort, and saw in its bastions and ramparts, its ditches and enormous *chevaux de frise* of sharply pointed logs, rest and safety after the long continued hardships and dangers of the way. It promised

relief, too, for her husband from the pressing responsibilities that had been his.

"Glad shall I be," she declared, "to be lodged within the safe shelter of fort walls once more."

"Well may you say that, madame," agreed Hugh Kennedy, for the great fort looked strong enough to defy many a heavy assault from enemy forces.

Between it and attack from the lake rose the high and commanding bluff on which it stood. Marshes lay to east and west, and outside the walls were the rich vegetable gardens of the fort. Farther to the west was a wide stretch of cleared and burned ground, over which charred stumps were scattered in savage disorder. It bared the mountain slope for a considerable distance not only to prevent an approaching enemy from finding cover, but also to establish a clear field of fire for the guns of the fort.

At the foot of the bluff, and winding northward, Lake George blazed in the midday sun, a sheet of molten silver, hemmed in by sleeping mountains, and dotted over by countless islands.

To Joscelyn and Mistress Armstrong the stronghold which they were approaching spelt safety. To Captain Armstrong it meant the successful termination of the vexations and responsibilities of a hazardous journey. Hugh Kennedy saw awaiting him there fresh opportunity. The redemptioner entered its gates, his face a mask, but in his heart the determination to compel this fortress to yield up to him its every secret that could minister to the purposes of Monsieur de Vaudreuil, and to the profit of Ambrose Jenkins.

CHAPTER VI



MIDSUMMER though it was, darkness had fallen early over Albany, for the sky was obscured by a dense curtain of cloud. The rain fell in torrents, and every rain-spout in the town threatened the garments of such passersby as gave no heed to where they walked, for these spouts of ancient pattern, instead of reaching to the ground, projected a yard or more beyond the eaves overhead, and discharged their burdens thence in a miniature waterfall over the pavement. When the wind blew, as it did tonight, none could escape a drenching, guard himself how he might.

The button-ball trees which lined the streets bent before the gale, as it ripped away by handfuls the leaves from their spotted branches. The cowherd had brought the cows to the church-square before the accustomed hour, and each now stood cowering, with dripping flanks, outside her owner's door, patiently awaiting the evening milking.

Upon the house-wall of Mynheer Philip Lyddius the thick wooden shutters creaked dismally on their clumsy iron hinges. A lilac bush by the window brushed its twigs insistently back and forth across the rain-splashed panes, as though imploring to be let in from the tempest into the candle-lighted room where the trader sat at supper with his daughters.

Mynheer Lyddius gave little heed to the wind and rain. He had matters of greater importance to engage

his attention, and on account of these he was thoroughly out of sorts, and indeed gravely uneasy. It had begun to seem to him as though the system of treasonable communication which he had carefully built up must have been discovered, or perhaps betrayed to those who were able to bring him and his confederates to justice. It had reached his ears that Du Quayne and La Force, his two most active workers, had come under suspicion. Furthermore, Ambrose Jenkins had not again presented himself, although the wagon-train with which he had set out for Fort William Henry, had returned to Albany some ten days since, as Lyddius had ascertained.

It was this last that gave him most especial uneasiness. He feared that he had been unwise to entrust to this stranger any business of importance until he had been fully tested in minor affairs. It was altogether possible that he might be an informer, who had wormed himself into the confidence of himself and his men, and was now in a position to furnish incriminating testimony against them. Perhaps, and here an angry gleam shot through the pale drab of his sly eyes, he might shortly cause the apprehension and arrest of himself, Mynheer Lyddius, who had heretofore been so cautious.

He fidgetted in his chair, and shoved back his plate of samp and vegetables almost untouched.

His daughter Anneke looked up in surprise at the gesture. Her father was not wont to spurn his food, particularly this, his favorite dish. Surely it must not have been flavored to his liking. She darted a fault-finding glance at her elder sister, who sat at the foot of the table, ruddy-faced, and full-bosomed, enjoying her own

plateful of this Dutch dish of samp, vegetables, and salt pork, cooked together in one vast pot.

"Again, Else, you have put not enough of the carrots in," she said. "So you have our father's supper spoilt."

Else prefaced her answer with a contemptuous sniff. "Perhaps you will it yourself make on the next time," she retorted, burying her silver fork in the thick brown crust upon her plate to prod off another mouthful.

Lyddius frowned, and rapped upon the table with his ivory-handled knife.

"Have quiet," he commanded brusquely. "The samp porridge is so good as ever. Is it that I must ask either of you when I shall push back my plate?"

At this Else tossed her gold ear-hoops triumphantly.

Anneke seized her porcelain mug, and gulped down a long draught of buttermilk in resentful silence.

They were not uncomely young women, these daughters of Lyddius, with the candle-light from the branching silver blekkers upon the wall flickering over them. Crisp winged caps of snowy white crowned their sleek hair. Striped blue and yellow damask petticoat and bodice, with gamp and sleeves of lawn, clothed Anneke, and made more fair her skin, more silvery her flaxen braids. A green taffetas dress with broad bands of crimson set off Else's roundness, and enhanced the cabbage-rose flush of her cheeks and the neutral brown of her hair. Yet at second glance their faces were not pleasing, for more than a hint of boldness glinted in Else's small red-brown eyes, and Anneke's drab orbs duplicated the slyness of her father's. Lyddius found them apt and unscrupulous enough tools when he had need of them, and had regretted more than once that

they were not sons, for then they would have been immeasurably more useful to him.

This resentful thought had but just recurred to him as he sat in disturbed musing, when the brass knocker upon his house-door fell cautiously three times.

It was Anneke who rose to answer.

On opening of the upper half-door to see who knocked, a gust of wind and rain swept over her, billowing out her voluminous sleeves, and sprinkling her face and starched cap.

The redemptioner loomed upon the doorstep, black against a black sky.

Anneke drew back, unbarred the lower door, and let him enter, for it was she who had lighted the room for her father upon Jenkins' first visit, and she recognized him instantly, even in this gloom.

The redemptioner slung off his dripping cloak. The water ran down from it to make a pool upon the waxed floor, before Anneke's feet.

She snatched at the garment without ceremony. "What wet it is that you bring in to the house-place!" she grumbled. "In kitchen it must hang." Leaving him standing where he had paused on entering, she hurried the offending cloak to the kitchen fire, giving her father notice, in passing, of the redemptioner's arrival.

Jenkins, waiting in the obscurity, broken only by the shaft of light that struck into it from the room beyond, looked after her with a wry smile.

Candle in hand, Lyddius came in presently, and scanned him from head to foot with a non-committal gaze. "You travel so slow, is it not?" he greeted him.

"Ten days ago already the wagon-train comes back. How is it that you come not with?"

Ignoring the implied reproof in the trader's tone, Jenkins seated himself without waiting for an invitation, and tossed his soaked hat upon the polished table.

Anneke, returning with more candles, set them down precipitately, and grasped the hat, to bear it also away to the kitchen hearth, lest its heavy moisture jeopardize the fine surface of the highly polished table.

"A notable young housewife," commented the redemptioner dryly.

His words and their import were not lost upon Anneke, and in passing she tossed him back a glance of thinly veiled scorn. Again he vouchsafed her a wry smile, and then gave his attention to the trader.

Lyddius began with some slight acerbity. "It makes nothing how my daughter is. It is of the matters that might profit Monsieur de Vaudreuil that I could wish you to at once speak."

"It is of that business that I have more than a little to tell you, when we are entirely private," returned Jenkins, looking significantly toward the door that led into the room beyond.

Lyddius, turning his head, perceived that Anneke had left it slightly ajar. He rose ponderously, went to it, and shut it with decision.

The attitude of the redemptioner changed on the closing of the door. He sat erect, his bearing alert, prepared to explain his delay. "You have good cause for satisfaction with what I have accomplished," he informed the trader.

"So," rejoined Lyddius, in a cautious undertone,

the asperity with which he had greeted his agent modified to some extent.

"Much," continued Jenkins impressively. "I have done less and more than I expected. On the way to the lake, thanks to the ears of the Captain's black-eyed minx, my plot for throwing away the supplies, and the desertion of the wagoners failed utterly, and the Captain quelled the mutiny that followed. To offset that, when we arrived at the Fort called Edward, at the Great Carrying Place, and halted there overnight, I contrived to make a plan of the fort and its defences, and added to it sundry notes concerning its military weaknesses."

"Good! Good! So good as I could wish. Ja, ja," purred Lyddius, rubbing his plump hands together.

"At Fort William Henry I needed time to gather the information that might be of service to the French general in case he should come up the lake to attack the fort."

"Ja," repeated Lyddius again, his countenance one vast oily smile, his teeth, yellowed by much tobacco, showing between his stretched lips.

"Thanks to my laming one of the Captain's horses by a trick known to me, I was able to remain more than a week at Fort William Henry."

Lyddius threw back his head and gave utterance to a long low chuckle.

Jenkins became yet more impressive in his manner. "That provided me with ample time to draw up a complete plan of Fort William Henry, to estimate the strength of its defences, the size of its garrison, the approaches to it from every quarter. Here are the plans

of the two forts, and the notes concerning them." He took them from their place of concealment in his powder-horn, and laid them in the palm of the trader.

"Such a man you are!" ejaculated Lyddius, in unbounded admiration. "Of such value to Monsieur de Vaudreuil!"

The gleam that shot through the steel of the redemptioner's eyes showed him not insensible to the flattery.

In the excess of his gratification, Philip Lyddius leaned to his successful agent, and grasped his hands in his own. "Much money shall come to you. I see to it myself," he promised.

"Then is my reward doubled," declared Jenkins dryly.

"Doubled?" said Lyddius slowly, "How is that so?" for he had not purposed to go beyond a certain sum in his remuneration of the redemptioner, no matter what the service rendered, until he had warrant for so doing from the Canadian Governor.

"Yes, doubled," asserted his companion, with a jarring laugh. "Revenge is my first reward, and gold the second."

"Revenge?" queried Mynheer Lyddius, his interest keenly aroused.

"I had a score to pay off against the gallant Captain, whose servant I have the doubtful honor to be. A little matter of the stocks by the public roadside, on a broiling day, because I cared none too much for farm labor, nor displayed the required zeal and industry. I presume I told his farmer my opinion on that score a bit too frankly for his taste. It was reckoned against me for insubordination, and brought me a punishment which

Captain Armstrong, a believer in his farmer's methods of discipline, refused to moderate. 'Twould do me good, forsooth, and teach me a proper idea of my duties. The laws that govern redemptioners and servants in this country are none too soft, I find, Mynheer Lyddius."

The Dutchman shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly. "A misfortune it is," he granted, "and in your case more especial, my friend. But what would you like? Many times the punishments are for those not worthy of better things." He ended with an insinuating smile.

"Captain Armstrong shall pay in full for every hour that I spent in that roadside purgatory," declared Jenkins grimly, striking his bronzed fist upon the table. The blow shook the candles in their sockets, and made the flames leap far out from the wicks. "Fortunately for the vengeance that I vowed while I sweated there in the stocks, your man Du Quayne came by, and saw me. He judged me ripe for your purposes, as I was in truth, and coming near, under pretence of jeering at me, invited me to meet him when I was free, and promised it should be to my advantage."

"So clever is that man, Du Quayne," commented the trader. "You, you too, are a clever one. Is it that you keep with us for sure?" He regarded the redemptioner narrowly as he asked the question, to detect, if possible, whether his professed intentions were without reservation.

"Think you that I would betray any cause that gives me opportunity to pay off my score against my so-called master? You would be a fool to believe it. Give me my pay now, for these recent services, and I will go."

The trader rose and went to an iron-bound strong-box, that stood at the right of the fire-place. He unlocked it, took out a small leathern bag, and brought it to the table. He loosed the thongs that fastened it, and took out a handful of mellow golden coins. Slowly, almost reluctantly, in spite of his profession of generosity, he slid them one by one across the table to the redemptioner.

With a nod of almost disdainful acknowledgement, Ambrose Jenkins swept them up, and rose to depart.

Lyddius first took the precaution to lock his strong-box, and then, returning to the table, rapped upon it to summon Anneke.

Entering promptly, she brought with her the redemptioner's cloak and hat, knowing well why her presence was desired. These were no longer dripping, but were still wet from the deluge through which he had come.

"A notable young housewife," he repeated ironically, in taking them from her, and unseen by her father, he raised a lean hand and chucked her impudently under her plump Dutch chin.

Anneke bridled fiercely, and flounced away, but as she passed through the door this second time, she turned to make a coquettish mouth at him, taking care that Lyddius saw naught of it.

Jenkins threw on his cloak, and settled his uncomfortably soaked hat over his brows. "Ugh! 'Tis no sweet night for journeying, and Schenectady is a long twenty miles hence, but sooner there, sooner dry," he said. "If 'twere not for the risk of discovery in breaking that devil's law of this land that forbids a redemptioner to buy or sell without permission from his master,

or for tavern keepers to entertain him, or give him a draught of liquor, I could make good use of a portion of this gold to purchase freedom, and cheer, and bodily comfort for twelve hours at least in your town of Albany."

Lyddius rested his fat hand caressingly upon the sleeve of his agent. "If it is not for risk, you should in the house of Philip Lyddius find comfort," he murmured.

The redemptioner gave a short cold laugh. "Should I reap naught worse than a rain-soaked garment in the business to which I am set, I shall count myself fortunate. Be that as it may, if the French know how to use what I have given you for them, they may come to Albany as they hope, and the Caughnawaga, Hooting Owl, may be the richer by the bounty that Monsieur de Vaudreuil will pay him for a scalp that I shall mention to him."

CHAPTER VII



FROM the shelter of the fort wall Joscelyn looked out across the glittering surface of the lake, that stretched mile after mile between guarding mountains, and tree shadowed islands. She longed to plunge into the emerald fastnesses of the encircling forests, to glide over the silvery expanses of the lake, to explore the winding channels between the countless islands alluringly spread before her eyes. As she viewed the scene from the steep bluff on which the fort was set, it promised, in itself, naught but pure delight. Brightness and beauty of dancing waters, fluttering leaves, and radiant summer sky, beckoned to her, and yet she dared not respond, for Fort William Henry lay in the direct path of danger.

She gave an impatient sigh as she thought of it.

A footstep that she knew sounded on the gravel behind her. Half turning her head, Joscelyn gave her discontent voice. "It irks me, Hugh, to bide within walls, when every atom of me is restless to be out yonder. Times there are when it seems as though I must rush down to shore, seize canoe, and push off boldly across water, come what may."

Hugh Kennedy rested an elbow upon the log wall in front of them, and made decisive answer. "That you will not, Joscelyn. The risk would be monstrous, and this you know as well as I."

"Surely I do. Never think that I would take it. Yet

'tis well-nigh unbelievable that haunts so peaceful and lovely to the eye should harbor cruel hatred and deadly warfare."

"Still,—so it is," returned Hugh briefly.

Soldier's daughter though she was, with war Joscelyn had as yet had naught to do, but now war threatened almost momentarily; war that might burst with hideous clamor from the forest depths, now green and silent, might surge in an overwhelming tide through the watery pass between the mountains.

At the head of Lake George, Colonel Monro, seasoned Scotch veteran, commanded Fort William Henry in defense of the British Colonies. Thirty miles away, at the foot of the lake, the Marquis de Montcalm held Fort Ticonderoga for the French, and awaited only an auspicious hour for attack upon the British fort. Victor there, if his ardent hopes should be fulfilled, he purposed to sweep on to Albany, and thence march his conquering army of French regulars, Canadian provincials, and Indian allies, straight into the heart of the enemy's country.

Joscelyn knew well, from stories told by scout and ranger, knew from Montcalm's unsuccessful attack upon the fort in early spring, knew from accounts brought back from reconnoitring parties, that every yard by land or water between these two opposing forts was sown with possibilities of lurking peril.

Nevertheless she let her eyes travel slowly, and with not a little envy, over the sturdy young figure beside her, clad, as always, in the picturesque garb of a ranger, his powder-horn, hatchet, and knife slung at his side.

"I'm half minded to disguise me as a ranger, Hugh, and go a-scouting with you," quoth she, jestingly.

Kennedy laughed outright. "A maid you are, Joscelyn, and a maid you would show out, disguise you how you may."

Tossing her blue-black locks, the girl gave indignant retort. "None the less brave, perhaps, for that."

"True, Joscelyn. I wager that no stouter heart goes out upon the reconnoitre to-night than beats in your own breast behind garrison walls," he returned admiringly.

Joscelyn, coloring high with pleasure at his frank praise, questioned him eagerly. "What hour is set for going, Hugh?"

"When dusk falls. That gives us cover of night to get far upon our way before morning breaks."

"You go with them, then?"

"Ay," he answered. "Colonel Parker leads, and we journey by water, fifteen barges, and three hundred provincials strong, to learn what we can of the French outposts."

"Doubtless my father goes, also," pursued Joscelyn.

"Yes."

"They go at dusk," she murmured, a shadow in her voice, "but who knows when or how they will come back?"

"Who knows?" echoed Kennedy, in tones as grave as his companion's, for in those days of the infant colonies how often men went forth, to return no more.

A chill upon their spirits, they stood, a silent pair, their gaze fixed intently upon the reaches of the wind-

ing lake as though they sought to penetrate thus the secrets of the days to come.

The cry of an owl broke in upon their musings.

"An owl!" exclaimed Joscelyn, in wide-eyed surprise. "Is it not uncanny at high noon? It has mistook the time."

Kennedy scanned lake and marshland, clearing and gardens, rapidly before giving answer. "If owl it be. More like 'tis some savage signalling. A most astonishing gift they have for mimicry of bird or beast, and use it, too, for making their presence known to a friend. I trust it means no harm to yon wagon-train, taking the road to Albany."

"There are those who declare that cry of owl by day is of ill omen," Joscelyn told him. "How much truer the saying, if the sound be from lurking savage who masquerades as owl."

Both followed with anxious eyes the train of wagons, whose drivers held themselves with careless indifference to the call. The last driver even loitered fearlessly behind the rest.

The owl cry was not repeated, nor did there reach the listeners upon the rampart any sound of distress from where the men and wagons had disappeared in a bend of the road that would have proclaimed that they had fallen into an ambush.

"More than all else, I hope," said Kennedy presently, "that there be no traitorous communications between the wagoners and our enemies. It has been told our generals that all our movements are constantly being made known to the French by traitors in our own camps, and forts. Indeed Du Quayne and La Force, against

whom Lord Loudon warned our General Johnson, are now held behind prison walls at Fort Frederick for such dastard's business."

"Think you it possible," breathed Joscelyn in incredulous amaze, "that our own soldiers lend themselves to such work?"

"So 'tis said. And yet, with wagoners, sutlers, and serving-man, as well as savages, coming and going about our forts and encampments, there is no lack of means by which such news could filter through without guilt of our own soldiery."

There was even more of truth in Kennedy's pronouncement than he guessed. As the redemptioner had told Lyddius, by cleverly laming his lead horse, he had contrived to remain at Fort William Henry for a week. This he had done by plucking a couple of hairs from the horse's tail, twisting them together, and binding them tightly around the fore-leg of the horse between its hoof and first joint. When the short hairs of the leg were smoothed into place, this ligature could not be seen. In a few hours the horse went lame, and remained so, until, one morning, Jenkins, being ready to depart, removed the ligature, and rubbed the leg skilfully, with the result that before noon of the same day all lameness had entirely disappeared.

The days so gained by him had been thoroughly improved. He had not only made plans and shrewd estimates of resources and weaknesses, and the characters of men and officers in the fort and the entrenched camp, but he had, by an ingratiating manner, scraped profitable acquaintance wherever he could while he wandered in apparent idleness about the fort and camp enclosures.

He had won an army sutler at Fort William Henry to become his willing confederate, and the sutler in turn had found means to corrupt a wagoner occasionally in the returning trains, who would carry reports to Lydius, or deliver them to some hovering Indian whichever at the time best served the interests of the French.

Hidden at this moment in a thicket where the forest road bent out of sight of the fort, Hooting Owl, the Caughnawaga, crouched, waiting to receive a promised message for his Onontio, this being the name by which the Indians called the Canadian Governor. He had given his signal, and doubted not that someone in the approaching train would deliver to him what he had come to seek.

One by one the wagoners passed his hiding-place, until the last of them, driving slowly, his hand buried in his jacket, drew near the spot where Hooting Owl lay in concealment. Immediately the Indian stepped cautiously from the embowering leaves, and the wagoner, seeing him, jerked out his hand, and tossed a small parcel to his feet. To the crack of the whip the horses plunged forward, rapidly lessening the distance between the treacherous driver and his comrades.

Hooting Owl stooped, caught up the parcel, and pushing aside the leafy curtain of the undergrowth, was instantly lost to view.

In that brief transaction there had been conveyed into the hands of the enemy as complete information of the proposed movements of the coming reconnoitre as the sutler had been able, by adroit questioning, to obtain from the unsuspecting provincial soldiery. To this he

had added whatever he had been able to gain by means of his own observation.

Dusk fell. The men appointed for the reconnoitre were embarking. Captain Armstrong, bidding his wife and daughter farewell, took them to his embrace with brave cheerfulness, and when Mistress Armstrong clung to him with more than her wonted fervor, he spoke to her confidently.

"Ten days, at the most, my sweet Bess, and I shall be with you again."

She bowed her head, in an assent that, for some undefined reason, her heart refused to echo.

For Joscelyn he had, "Keep up your mother's spirits, lass, and be my good daughter."

"Ay, father," Joscelyn replied, "That I will,—a soldier's daughter."

He gave her his most approving smile, gently disengaged himself from his wife's arms, and ran down to the waiting boats.

Joscelyn, slipping her hand within her mother's, stood close beside her upon the rampart, watching each boat as it filled rapidly with provincials, and pushed out a little from shore to await the signal for departure.

In the dim light the tall figures of Captain Armstrong and Hugh Kennedy towered head and shoulders above the rest.

The voices of the embarking officers, now tossing back and forth good-humored banter, now raised in sharp command, floated to their listening ears, but at length the final word was given.

Straining to catch the last faint glimpse of them, Joscelyn and her mother saw the fifteen barges of the

expedition, propelled by strong rowers, glide in close formation steadily off and away into the darkness and dangers of the silent lake.

Then Mistress Armstrong gave way. Casting her arms about her daughter with a smothered sob, she shook from head to foot with the intensity of the grief that possessed her.

Remembering her promise to her father, Joscelyn struggled to keep back her tears that she might the better console and hearten her mother. "Think, dearest," she whispered, "think. Father goes to no greater peril than he has faced before. There are with him three hundred men, all well armed. 'Tis not as though they went to battle. 'Tis but a reconnoitre."

"Yes, yes, I know," sighed Mistress Armstrong, "and yet my heart misgives me sorely. My fears weigh me down. It is as though he were on his way to imprisonment, or certain death."

Joscelyn stroked back the bright hair from her mother's brow. "There are few men braver than father, but he is cautious as well as brave," she reminded her. "He has always come and gone safely. This time 'twill be the same."

And presently, for her daughter's sake, Mistress Armstrong ruled herself, and restrained her grief.



CHAPTER VIII



THERE was a stir outside the fort gates.

General Webb, second in command of His Majesty King George's forces in America, was come from Fort Edward, some fifteen miles to the south, escorted by his regulars and a picked body of provincials, to inspect the garrison and resources of Fort William Henry.

The echoes from the salute of guns from the fort, to which his rank entitled him, were drowned by the blare of trumpet, beat of drum, and whistle of fife that heralded his arrival.

Pulses quickened by the unwonted commotion, and welcome break in the monotony of garrison life, Joscelyn made haste to seek a point of vantage outside the barracks door. Mistress Armstrong, listlessly yielding to her daughter's persuasions, companioned her.

Mured for over a month now, in this remote garrison, and the only maid of her station there, Joscelyn missed keenly the young associates, and the freer life that she had enjoyed in Albany. Mistress Armstrong, also, was not without her own sense of isolation, although she had greater opportunities for companionship than her daughter, among the wives of the officers; yet her interests were so closely woven about her husband

and child, that these had kept her content until the departure of the reconnoitre. Since that evening she had not regained her usual serenity. Heavy forebodings seemed to weigh her down. Joscelyn, on the contrary, had no anxiety for her father. With the optimism of her years, and her unbounded confidence in his resourcefulness and courage, she was convinced that he would be able to cope successfully with whatever dangers beset him, and she strove, though vainly, to inspire her mother with something of her own faith.

It was with very different feelings, therefore, that the two went to see the British general ride in.

He sat his spirited bay mare well, and the gold lace on his beaver caught the morning sun. Though he was not unhandsome, Joscelyn viewed him with disfavor.

"True though it be that he is second to none but Lord Loudon himself, and holds his head proudly enough," whispered she to her mother, over her shoulder, "yet were the French and Indians upon us, I would trust a hundred times over to the bravery of our gallant Colonel Monro, than I would to this man."

"And with reason," agreed her mother. "None question the courage and ability of Colonel Monro, but it has more than once been said of General Webb that he thinks first of retreat and of his own safety, and of defence of his post and of his men last."

"A coward then," pronounced downright Joscelyn scornfully. "Glad am I that we are at Fort William Henry with Colonel Monro for commandant, rather than at Fort Edward with General Webb."

She liked him none the better, veered from her first opinion not a whit, when in the four days that followed,

she observed him passing from point to point within the fort enclosure, surveying stores and defences, reviewing troops, pacing slowly up and down upon the parade, deep in converse with the slender grey-haired commandant. General though he was, his presence there brought her no increase of confidence, nor sense of added security.

Everywhere there was flashing of scarlet uniforms, and a prodigious rushing hither and yon of subalterns.

From the minuteness of General Webb's inspection only the casemates were exempt, for in these gloomy dungeon-like vaults of masonry set in the flanks of the bastions lay numbers of men smitten by that scourge of earlier days, small-pox. None disturbed in their misery these victims of a loathsome disease, none approached them at all save on the most imperative errands.

Joscelyn, whose observant eyes nothing escaped, remembered afterward with surprising distinctness every detail, even the most trivial, of General Webb's visit to the fort, yet etched upon her brain with a vividness far more intense was the memory of a certain hour at grey dawn.

It was the early morning of July 26th. The first faint glow of the returning sun had not yet touched the sky. The mists were dropped like a dense curtain over the lake, shrouding mountains and forests, wooded points, and cannon-guarded ramparts. The low-ceiled room where Elizabeth Armstrong lay in uneasy slumber, with Joscelyn curled beside her in the deep sleep of youth, was thick with shadows.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly these shadows were

fading from black to grey, when a frenzied cry, loud and shrill, rang through the silent room. It roused Joscelyn sharply to consciousness, and brought her bolt upright in surprise and alarm.

She beheld her mother kneeling upon the bed, leaning tensely forward, with arm rigidly outstretched, and pointing finger. Her face was stricken, her eyes distended as one in horrid vision.

"Ralph! Ralph!" she shrieked, "Beware! Do you not see them? They lie in wait for you! There,—there,—where the willows bend beyond the point!"

In pity Joscelyn threw her arms about her mother, and drew her to her bosom. "Hush, hush, mother," she soothed her. "Hush, dearest. You do but dream."

"A dream?" sobbed Elizabeth Armstrong shuddering, "A dream? God grant it may be that, and nothing more."

"'Tis naught else," Joscelyn assured her, holding her close. "Tell me what it was you saw. 'Twill relieve you."

"I saw your father, in frightful danger," whispered Mistress Armstrong brokenly, and for a little she could say no more.

By degrees, as she became calmer, Joscelyn drew from her the content of her dream.

Mistress Armstrong had seemed to herself to be upon the upper expanses of a lake. Mountains rose boldly on either side of it, and from the western shore a long narrow point of low land, densely wooded, thrust itself half-way across the lake. Over all hung the morning mists, but in spite of these she could discern a multitude of birchen canoes filled with savages. They were drawn

close to the leafy covert of the point, and the intently watchful listening attitude of the Indians proclaimed them as in ambuscade.

As she looked, frantic fear seized her, for she saw three barges laden with provincial soldiers veer from the opposite shore to round this point. She clearly recognized them. They were the men of Colonel Parker's reconnoitre.

Through stiffened lips she had tried to shriek out a warning, but could make no sound.

The men drew on. Frozen with horror, she saw the painted savages, in grim and cruel silence, dart out upon the soldiers, killing and capturing them without mercy.

Three more barges, advancing unsuspectingly, met the same fate.

The last group of barges approached the ambuscade. At the front of one of these stood Captain Armstrong, his military cloak fluttering in the breeze. Then Elizabeth Armstrong found voice, and her poignant cry had awakened her daughter as well as herself.

Listening to her mother's recounting of this hideous nightmare, Joscelyn felt as though she had herself experienced it, and was thus the better able afterward to sympathize with and understand her mother's starts of fear, her paling cheeks, her smothered cry, at every sudden and unwonted sound.

Meanwhile General Webb carried his inspection of the fort to a finish, and having ascertained to his satisfaction its possibilities for siege or battle, given sundry orders, and made promises of increasing the garrison by men to be sent from Fort Edward, took his departure at the end of the four days, with the same flourish of

military music, flashing of red cloth and gold braid, and prancing of horses with which he had arrived.

He returned to Fort Edward, to write his report to Lord Loudon, and to send to Fort William Henry a detachment of three hundred regulars under Lieutenant Colonel Young, and eight hundred Massachusetts men under Colonel Frye, thus raising the force at the lake to twenty-two hundred men.

Lord Loudon loitered at Halifax, amusing himself with sham battles, while Colonel Monro at Fort William Henry, attentive solely to duty, kept up an uninterrupted and vigilant watch over the waters of Lake George.

CHAPTER IX



ON THE parade the soldiers stood at guard-mount. The sunset gun boomed out across the lake, and Joscelyn, thinking of her absent father, wondered whether the men on reconnoitre might not now be near enough, perhaps, to be greeted by its welcome sound.

July had drawn to a close, and August had opened, without the return of Colonel Parker, or any who had gone out with him. The party being so considerably overdue, there was scant room for doubt that disaster in some form had overtaken them. Yet in spite of a growing uneasiness in regard to their fate, there were none in the fort, from Colonel Monro down, who did not cling to the hope that at any moment the barges might come into view upon the lake.

This hope filled the heart of Joscelyn, and she held it with tenacity. Indeed, for her mother's sake, as well as for her own, she dared not abandon it, for Elizabeth Armstrong, who was not usually lacking in courage, had suddenly come to lean upon her young daughter, as though she were her husband's self.

In this distant fort, severed from her old and intimate friends, Mistress Armstrong found her chief solace in correspondence with them, and on this evening she had brought her writing-portfolio to the table in the window recess, that she might have the advantage of the daylight that remained, to finish a letter to Madame

Schuyler, which she had begun, and which she wished to send next day by wagon-train.

Her mother being thus engaged, Joscelyn had slipped out upon the parade, where in the golden light the troops of the fort stood at attention before the commandant's quarters.

Inspection was just over, and the reliefs, assigned by the junior officer, Lieutenant Blakiston, were about to march to the guard-house.

The brilliant uniforms, and trim figures of the men, thrown into sharp relief by the dun-colored log walls of the commandant's quarters, roll of drum, and shrilling of fife, familiar though they were to her, possessed for Joscelyn a ceaseless allure.

The footfalls of first, second, and third relief smote crisply upon her ear. She listened until they grew fainter, and finally died away as they entered the guard-house by the sally-port.

Standing close to the well, she watched the sentries change, and saw the swallows, with a blue flashing of swift wings, wheeling and darting, dipping and rising, now around her, and now out over the richly dyed surface of the calm lake.

Then she looked farther on, over the long stretch of water slowly growing dark under the oncoming shades of night. What would she not give to see the homing barges appear through that far off watery gateway, narrow and islet strewn, guarded on the one hand by a shelving mass of rock, and on the other by an enormous tongue-like mountain of rugged height, that twelve miles distant though it was, she could see distinctly from where she stood. Farther on, behind Black

Mountain's frowning bulk, well-nigh twenty miles of winding lake lay hidden. A fate as evil as that in her mother's dream, a fate as hidden as the lake itself, might easily have waited for the reconnoitre there.

A sigh upon her lips, she turned away, to go in to her mother.

Instead she remained for a moment, rooted to the spot, in the grip of cold fear, for at the sally-port, halted by the sentry, stood Hugh Kennedy, the ranger, —*alone*.

The sight of his solitary figure, coupled with the vacant expanses of the lake that she had but just left gazing upon, told her all too clearly, even had she failed to note his haggard face and tattered garments, that he was the bringer of bad tidings.

She remained transfixed thus for a moment only. Then she raced toward him, her heart in her throat.

"Hugh, Hugh!" she gasped, forgetting that much must pass before news could be given to her private ear, "Tell me,—where is father?"

The sentry gave Kennedy no more time than to throw her a glance surcharged with pity and sympathy, before he hurried him into the small log hut close to the sally-port, where the officer of the guard sat smoking, for it was to him that the tale, whatever its nature, must first be told.

Trembling, Joscelyn waited, leaning against the log wall for support, until he should come out again, and perhaps be permitted to give her some word of hope or encouragement.

Yet when he did, there was no opportunity for even the briefest speech. Lieutenant Blakiston was with him,

and the two, with set faces, and looking neither to right nor left, strode rapidly across the parade to the office of the commandant.

There they paused only until the sentry had obtained permission for them to pass in. Joscelyn knew by this that the news which Hugh had brought was of the gravest import, and that he might remain closeted with the commandant for a considerable time.

Meanwhile her mother must not learn from any other source than herself, who would break it gently to her, that Hugh had come back alone.

Mistress Armstrong was as she had left her, absorbed in her letter.

Joscelyn went to her, and laid a loving hand upon her shoulder. "Mother," she said, in a voice that quivered in spite of all that she could do, "a ranger has come to the sally-port, and the officer of the guard has taken him to the commandant."

"Yes," replied Mistress Armstrong absently, her pen continuing its even progress across the paper.

"'Tis," Joscelyn paused yet a moment, dreading the shock that she knew it would be to her, and then went on. "'Tis Hugh Kennedy,—back from the reconnoitre."

The scratching of the quill ceased abruptly. Elizabeth Armstrong raised her eyes to her daughter's as one who expects a blow, and fortifies herself to meet it.

"Yes?" she said, with a sharp intake of the breath.

"He came alone," murmured Joscelyn, her voice unsteady.

The pen dropped from Mistress Armstrong's nerveless fingers, making a dark blot upon the finely written page.

"Alone!" she echoed faintly, and then rallying herself, and refusing to believe the worst, she said, "Your father and the others follow soon. Young Kennedy comes before, merely to bring some special word from Colonel Parker."

Joscelyn let her mother have it so, knowing that she spoke as she did only that she might hold to hope a little longer.

Shoving back her chair with a harsh scraping of wood on wood, Elizabeth Armstrong rose to her feet.

"Come, Joscelyn," she said, drawing herself upright by a valiant effort, for her limbs almost refused their office, "We will go to Colonel Monro's door. There we will be allowed to have speech with Hugh when he comes out."

In spite of Mistress Armstrong's resolute demeanor, Joscelyn felt through the thin muslin of her sleeve how cold the hand was that clutched her arm for support. That icy touch contracted her heart with a fear equal to her mother's.

The news of Kennedy's return had spread throughout the garrison, and when Joscelyn and Mistress Armstrong arrived at the commandant's quarters they found an excited crowd assembled there, to watch, like themselves, for the opening of the heavy oaken door.

Immovable as a statue before it stood the sentry on guard.

Back and forth upon the rampart paced other sentries, each to his own corner of the wall, round it, and back again, interminably repeating, while the anxious group waited.

Unreal as puppets these sentries seemed to Joscelyn.

Her suspense grew almost unendurable. It seemed as though her eyes fastened upon that closed door, her ears straining for its first creak upon its massive iron hinges, would never be rewarded.

Kennedy came forth at last, his face graven deep with lines of past suffering and present pain. Twice already it has been his duty to relate the details of the expedition to his superior officers, and he knew that he must tell them again to these waiting ones, who stood in a close-pressed mass beyond the sentry.

At sight of him, from the soldier's throats arose the cry, "What news, Kennedy? What news? Let's have it quickly, man, be't good or bad."

Barely had he passed the sentry when Joscelyn was plucking at his sleeve, and Joscelyn's beseeching tones, low-pitched though they were, pierced his heart. "My father, Hugh, where is my father?"

From beyond her the burning eyes of Mistress Armstrong drew his in voiceless agonized appeal.

Before he could collect his benumbed wits to soften the tale, his answer leapt forth, in two words, as fraught with gruesome meaning to the ears they fell upon as though he had detailed it in a thousand.

"The savages," he muttered hoarsely, and involuntarily his hand went to his eyes, as though to shut out sights which he would fain forget.

At those words Elizabeth Armstrong reeled and would have fallen, had not pitying arms been there to steady her.

The insistent demands of the soldiery roused Kennedy. "Quick man, tell us more,—all you know," they

clamored. "Have none escaped? Surely not all are dead, except yourself!"

"Whether or no any but myself escaped, I know not," Hugh answered. "All that I saw were killed or captured!"

A shudder ran through the multitude. Death at such hands was terrible, but oftentimes the tortures endured in captivity made swift death to be preferred.

"My husband? Which was't for him?" Mistress Armstrong urged, insistently.

"Captured, with others to above a hundred, and driven away," replied Hugh.

Desperate though she now knew her husband's plight to be, Mistress Armstrong breathed freer, for men had escaped savage toils ere this, often as by a miracle. Perhaps it would be so with him.

The hope that stirred, however faintly, in Elizabeth Armstrong's breast, awoke strongly in Joscelyn. "He will return," she murmured consolingly in her mother's ear, as she had so many times in these past weeks, "I am sure he will; and mayhap soon."

Few who caught her words shared her hope.

Kennedy replied as gently as he could to the questions showered upon him, while wails and heart-broken sobs arose, as one and then another learned of the fate that had overtaken their dearest.

But those first wild questions answered, they listened in a stunned silence, more poignant than sighs or tears, when he began to relate the full story.

"'Twas on the morning of twenty-sixth July, in the grey dawn, that we came to Sabbath Day Point, by the Indians called Sabbatay. 'Tis an arm of the western

shore that thrusts itself in a long sandy promontory half across the lake. Till then we had met with no mishap, and the lake seemed empty of everyone but ourselves. Oaks and aspens, birch and pine grew thick along the coves, but beyond the arm of sand willows stood in a close screen."

Joscelyn, bracing herself for what must come next, heard her mother breathe faster.

With a distinct effort Hugh Kennedy went on.

"By Colonel Parker's command, our nine barges had been separated, and were advancing in groups of three, each group well behind the other. In that formation we approached the sandy point."

"And there?" Mistress Armstrong leaned to him, her great eyes distended.

"The redskins lay in wait for us in swarms."

"Beyond the willows! Alas! So did I dream." She bowed her head in her hands, and fell to weeping piteously, knowing that she need hear no more.

Her own tears falling fast, but silent like the rest, Joscelyn listened with them to the story of that disastrous dawn. Soldiers with set lips, women with anguished faces, hung upon his words till all was told.

Spent as he was by hunger and privation, and the vicissitudes of the way, it needed all the command of himself of which he was capable to enable him to recount the harrowing details for this third and most difficult time.

He told how most of the men, paralyzed by surprise and sudden terror, had yielded themselves to their enemies almost without struggle or cry.

Captain Armstrong and Kennedy, in one of the last

three barges, approached the point just as the mist, in long white streamers, was lifting from the lake. At that moment, from behind the willow screen a swarm of swiftly darting canoes, filled with savages, hideous in their war-paint, rushed out upon them, screeching and yelling till the mountains rang again. Arrows and musket-balls fell thick around them, and the redskins wielded tomahawk and scalping-knife without mercy.

The soldiers, terrified and vastly outnumbered, were forced to abandon the hopeless struggle, and at last jumped from the barges, hoping to escape by wading ashore in the shallow water, and losing themselves from sight in the forest. Their hope was vain. Those who were not killed outright, were bound, and driven with ropes about their necks through the woods to face torture perhaps, captivity certainly, in the land of their foes. Hugh Kennedy, alone, had contrived to escape without capture, and bring the news.

In every particular, his account of the catastrophe agreed with Elizabeth Armstrong's dream.

They were seasoned soldiers, and soldiers' wives and daughters, who listened to his story of the calamitous ending of the reconnoitre, and as such they bore themselves after their first outburst of bitter grief and dismay.

CHAPTER X

AT SUNSET of the day of Hugh's return Joscelyn had gazed wistfully across a reach of water untenanted by any human creature, but when next morning she drew aside the snowy dimity curtain of the window to look out upon that same expanse, bright under the rays of the sun rising above the eastern mountains, she gave a sharp cry of astonishment and alarm.

Joscelyn, clutching the curtain mechanically, could not reply.

One glance told her the cause of Joscelyn's outcry, one glance made her shrink back, and her delicate head fell forward suddenly upon her slender neck like a lily broken upon its stalk.

"The savages!" gasped Joscelyn, and shuddered.

Up the lake, in appalling array, came his artillery: cannon and mortars standing on broad and solid platforms, each of which was supported on either side by bateaux, rowed with long and sturdy sweeps by Canadian militia-men.

Crowding behind these, breast to breast, covering the placid bosom of the lake from shore to shore, were a multitude of birchbark canoes, laden with naked painted Indians, bending to their paddles, and sending their craft forward with rhythmic strokes, and barges filled with French regulars, and Canadian militia, fully armed.

It was the redmen from north and east, from the far west, from plain and forest, panoplied for war with eagles' feathers, ceremonial paint, buffalo horns, armed with steel hatchets, stone war-clubs, flint-headed arrows, bows, and French guns, that had aroused Joscelyn's alarm. It was the artillery of the French that struck cold terror to Mistress Armstrong, for she was well aware that although the redmen might attack the fort and make the aftermath of battle hideous, that it was the onslaught of cannon and mortar that might make the fortress fall.

Heralding the advent of the foe came salute of cannon, and war-cries and yells of defiance from savage throats; and the din, caught up by the encircling hills and mountains, was increased in volume by countless echoes and reverberations.

Joscelyn gazed upon the rapidly approaching enemy with lack-lustre eyes, which sleep had scarce visited since Hugh had come with his sorrowful tidings. She could guess, with none to tell her, that added to those upon the waters, a far greater force must be marching against the fort through the forest, under cover of close-growing tree-trunks, and dense foliage.

Looking down into the fort enclosure from this upper window, she saw that at each of the seventeen cannon,

great and small, upon the ramparts, a gunner stood ready, that every mortar was manned. It gave to her a return of confidence.

"The fort is very strong," she murmured to her mother, remembering all its defences, and the troops in the entrenched camp at the rear.

Mistress Armstrong kept silence. Knowing more of the possible fortunes of war than did her daughter, she brought her eyes to rest upon the excited women and children who now began to throng the parade, and clamor to be reassured, and she pondered the fate of these, should the enemy be victorious.

"The fort is very strong," repeated Joscelyn, in fuller, more courageous voice.

"Yes," returned her mother, in a monotone, and prayed that it might prove so.

"Our soldiers are about to make a sortie," exclaimed Joscelyn. "See, they are leaving the sally-port, and Hugh Kennedy is with them."

"Doubtless they go to bring in the cattle that are roaming on the burned ground, and to carry away the tents from the hill plateau," Mistress Armstrong answered dully.

In this she was right. Roving about over this dismal area covered with charred and blackened logs and stumps were the cattle of the fort, and scattered about in the clearing stood a few isolated outbuildings. To destroy these outbuildings, that they might afford no shelter to the enemy, to drive in the cattle, and secure the tents, was not the easy task that it would have been an hour earlier, for as the men began to take down the tents, and herd together the scattered beasts, and

set fire to the rude huts, tiny puffs of smoke spouted from the scorched edges of the wood, and the bullets that sang about them, and spattered at their feet, gave certain evidence that the advance guard of Montcalm had already arrived.

Rattle of musketry, shouts, and war-cries, made faint by distance, came to the ears of the anxious watchers at the window. Skirmishing grew hot, and presently a detachment of the garrison emerged from the fort, to give support to their comrades. This they succeeded in doing, in spite of the constant firing, and the tents were conveyed safely to the entrenched camp by a few picked men, while the main body returned to the fort, driving the cattle before them, leaving the outbuildings swallowed up in leaping flames.

Watching the progress of this, Joscelyn's attention was diverted for the time being from the menace upon the lake.

Not so Mistress Armstrong. Her thoughts were concentrated upon where the foe might land, from whence they would train their guns upon the fort, how soon they would open hostilities?

While she was asking herself these questions, she perceived that the first was about to be answered. The bateaux conducting the artillery swerved from their hitherto straight course, and made for a point at the left of the bluff crowned by Fort William Henry. Just north of this point a deep ravine carried a brook down to a small cove. The point of land protected this cove from the guns of the fort. It was this sheltered spot which Montcalm had chosen for debarking his artillery.

One by one the bateaux became hidden as they en-

tered the cove. The canoes followed. Beyond the ravine the camp of Montcalm was already rapidly forming. Within the cove the cannon and mortars were being put ashore, and the canoes beached.

Concealed though this was from her, Mistress Armstrong turned away from the window, as the last canoe disappeared from view, for she had seen enough.

"They are landing the artillery," she said, and her sight was blurred. Only for a moment did she yield to weakness. Then she drew herself together, and spoke again, her voice calm, her mien steady. "Come, Joscelyn," she bade, "Let us leave off watching. The battle will be soon, and there is work for the women of the fort to do. You and I must bear our share of it."

They dressed speedily, without further speech, and passed into the pleasant family room where most of their waking hours were spent. Breakfast was waiting, and black Deborah, their serving-maid, hovered over pots and kettles at the fire-place, showing a sturdy contempt for the excitement which was rife among her fellows.

"'Tain't no sense in all dis here upstir, Mistiss Armstrong," she commented, setting the steaming bowls of samp upon the table. "Mistah Kunnel Monro, he ain't gwine let no Frenchers take dis fort. Dey jest natcherly can't do it, nohow. Why, jest look at dem monsrus cannon settin' out dere on de wall, high up, to pick off whomsoever comes anigh! Look at dem double walls. Look at dem sharpened logs stickin out every which-away. No ma'am, dey's gwine have dere trouble fur dere pains, what comes a strivin' to take dis fort."

Mistress Armstrong forbore to unsettle her confidence,

and insensibly the sight of the faithful negress, with head held high, and swathed in its many colored bandanna, her portly figure moving composedly about her morning duties, brought back her own troubled spirit for a little while at least into an atmosphere of stability and normal activities.

And Joscelyn, looking at her mother, seated as usual behind the steaming coffee-urn, hearing the sparrows twittering in the eaves, receiving rich gusts of perfume from the roses plucked yesterday in the fort garden, could scarce believe what she had beheld but a short half-hour ago.

Yet whatever momentary allaying of apprehension mother and daughter experienced, whatever confidence Deborah felt in the strength of the fort and the commandant's power to defend it, Colonel Monro was betrayed into no false sense of security. Not in a position to estimate accurately the size of the force that was being marshalled against him, he nevertheless knew it to be vastly superior to his own, which was but two thousand, two hundred men. Acting upon the certainty of this, he despatched a messenger at nine o'clock that morning to General Webb, telling him that the French had appeared in great numbers upon the lake.

If he had hoped that the commandant at Fort Edward would be impelled to send him reinforcements, he reckoned without the cowardly Webb. The day wore on, the night passed, and neither reply nor reinforcements arrived.

These first hours of waiting brought no unusual activities to the women of the fort. Restless and uneasy, they wandered about, leaving ordinary duties neglected,

officers' wives visiting one another in their separate quarters, in the hope that some comforting news might have filtered through from headquarters, while the wives of the private soldiers clustered before their barracks, alert to seize upon anyone passing who might give out some bit of information.

Crossing the parade on an errand to Mistress Macpherson for her mother, Joscelyn met Hugh Kennedy, going in the same direction as herself. The question which was agitating the minds and hearts of all sprang instantly to her lips. "When think you the battle will begin, Hugh?"

"None can tell you that, Joscelyn,—not even Colonel Monro," he answered, "for it depends upon when the French show themselves before the fort, and give us opportunity."

He had time for no more than this brief word with her, but his eyes followed her, when they had parted, until the last fluttering fold of her gown of watchet blue, the last glimpse of her white falling sleeves had vanished through Mistress Macpherson's door.

Then he strode briskly on toward the office of the commandant, whither he had been summoned.

Joscelyn's errand to Mistress Macpherson was to beg that good lady to join with Mistress Armstrong and the wives of other officers in preparing lint and bandages for the wounds that must inevitably follow in the course of battle, and to ask her to bring with her such old linen and sheets as she could spare for the work.

Soon the mess hall was the scene of bustling activity. Matrons, who but a few evenings ago had assembled there with rolled and powdered hair, and in rustling

silks and satins, for the ceremonious function of regimental mess, now bent over tables covered with piles of old napery, instead of silver service, fine porcelain, and good cheer. Sheets were being torn into long strips and wound into neat tight rolls under the supervision of Mistress Armstrong.

In their own mess hall the wives of the common soldiers were engaged in the same task.

Meanwhile General Montcalm was engaged in examining the ground, landing his artillery, posting his men, and forming plans for the taking of the fort. Deciding, after a tour of inspection, that it would be too hazardous to attack from behind the entrenched camp, because of its strong breastwork of stones and logs, he began preparations to lay regular siege to the fort. But before these were completed, he despatched an aide-de-camp, under flag of truce to Colonel Monro, with a letter asking him to surrender.

"I owe it to humanity," he wrote him, "to summon you to surrender. At present I can restrain the savages, and make them observe the terms of a capitulation, as I might not have power to do under other circumstances; an obstinate defence on your part could only retard the capture of the fort a few days, and endanger an unfortunate garrison, which cannot be relieved in consequence of the dispositions I have made. I demand a decisive answer within an hour."

Occupied as these women of the fort were at the work that had been inaugurated by Mistress Armstrong, they neither saw the arrival of Montcalm's aide-de-camp, nor the hostile Indians swarming over the fields before the fort, but while the flags of truce were flying, and in the

midst of the babel of their own voices, their ears were assailed by the booming of cannon upon the ramparts, by which Colonel Monro emphasized his unqualified refusal to surrender the fortress.

Scissors, linen, bandages, fell from the women's fingers. From dry throats the words leaped out:

"The battle has begun!"

A silence as of death fell on the mess hall. The women stared on vacancy, their spirits utterly withdrawn from the task before them.

Mistress Armstrong was first to take up her shears. "Ay, the battle has begun," she repeated solemnly. "So much the more need, then, of what our hands can do."

There were few words spoken after that, but every woman about the table labored as though each completed bandage that fell from her fingers, every shred of soft and snowy lint that swelled the pile before her, formed part of the commandant's uncompromising answer to the foe.

It was Hugh Kennedy who told Joscelyn afterward that when the Indians learned how Montcalm's overture had been received, he had heard an Abenaki chieftain shout in broken French, "You won't surrender, eh? Fire away then, and fight your best, for if I catch you, you'll get no quarter."

On the evening of the second day, Joscelyn went again to the window that had revealed the coming of the French to her. Three rangers were passing out of the fort to take the road to Ford Edward. Hugh Kennedy was not one of them. It comforted her that this was so, for Hugh's presence in the fort gave her a feeling of protection and security.

One of these rangers carried a second letter to General Webb, telling him that firing had begun, and closing with, "I believe you will think it proper to send a reinforcement as soon as possible."

If in answer to this, Webb should send succor at once, before the fort should be surrounded, and access to the outside world cut off, there was hope for the brave little garrison.

The second appeal, like the first, met with no reply.

All through that night of August 4th the cannon roared from the ramparts of the fort without ceasing. From her bed Joscelyn saw the glare lighting up the sky, and heard the whistling and screaming of grape and round shot as they sped out into the darkness.

Long she lay, tensely listening, but at last, creeping closer to her mother, who feigned sleep, she dropped into uneasy slumber.

While she waked, and while she slept, eight hundred Frenchmen, outside the fort, labored through the long hours of the night to open trenches, their task made difficult in the extreme by the masses of half burnt tree-trunks, stumps, roots, and branches with which the ground was cumbered, and by the fire from the fort. But pick, and axe, and spade, and an indomitable industry and will conquered in spite of all hazards, so that by daybreak the first parallel trench was completed, a battery at the left was almost finished, upon the right another was rising, and the men could now continue their work under cover.

Three days had passed since the French had appeared, and they were still engaged solely in the business of

preparation: in digging of trenches, erecting of batteries, placing of artillery.

In the fort, the tension of constant alertness, coupled with delayed action, increased from hour to hour. The routine of the garrison went on. There were a few losses among the Indians who skulked behind logs and stumps outside the fort to fire on the men upon the ramparts. Now and again an artilleryman upon the wall was picked off by one of their bullets, to be hurried away to the surgeon's care, but that was all.

Appeal after appeal was sent to Webb by Monro, for help before the fort should be cut off. The last messenger to go was Hugh Kennedy, on the evening of that third day.

He went alone, by his own wish. "It will be best so, sir," he assured the commandant. "I can the more readily elude those who might pursue me, and have better chance to slip unseen past those who may be occupying the road."

"Go, then, and God go with you," said Monro, dismissing him. "We shall soon be sore pressed. Indeed I fear that we are already cut off."

Joscelyn was looking from her post of observation as Hugh left the sally-port. She leaned far out, and he, as if drawn to it by her steady gaze, turned and saw her there. He saluted, Joscelyn waved her hand, and in the next instant he was lost to view.

At sunrise, next morning, the tremendous roaring of Montcalm's heavy cannon gave warning that hostilities had fully begun.

CHAPTER XI



IT WAS now six days since the coming of Montcalm with his force of 7600 men; six days of dying hopes, and growing despair.

Monro's repeated appeals to General Webb for help had been in vain, and neither Hugh Kennedy, nor any other messenger sent to Fort Edward had returned.

Under the ceaseless pounding of Montcalm's artillery, great breaches yawned in the once strong walls of Fort William Henry. The large cannon of the fort were burst, or so damaged as to be almost useless; only seven small pieces were still fit for service. Ammunition was well-nigh spent. The wounded and dying were many, and in the casemates small-pox raged unchecked.

Nevertheless, the courage of the garrison held, inspired by the intrepid bravery of Colonel Monro, who, with grim tenacity, was determined to hold back the invading French as long as possible.

Through these dreadful days Joscelyn and Mistress Armstrong moved, self-forgetful, sustained by a power beyond themselves, tending the sick, comforting the dying, consoling the bereaved women and children. In the face of the universal calamity, they kept their private grief hidden. Only at night, when they were alone, did nature have its way, and they clasped one another close, murmuring words of mutual sympathy and affection. Yet even when most cast down, Joscelyn displayed a

stubborn conviction, in which her mother could not join, that her father lived, and would be given back to them.

There seemed nothing to justify any such hope, surrounded as the garrison was by powerful enemies, who could not but be victorious, whose conquest of the fort could be but a few hours distant, and who numbered among them hosts of savages, who already showed a cruel exultation that promised the worst to those unfortunates who fell into their hands.

So near were these enemies now, that the redskins crawled among the cabbages, beans, and maize of the fort garden, just outside the ramparts. The sappers and miners had done their work well, and in that once pleasant and fruitful garden a battery was set up, a mere two hundred and fifty yards from the fort. The mouths of the cannon soon to be planted there would directly face that part of the ramparts which shielded the barracks. August 7th dawned with a clear sky overhead, but below the smoke rolled in clouds about the fortress, almost obscuring it, and the ceaseless cannonading from Montcalm's batteries, the fire of his guns, answered by the constant retort from the lesser pieces of the fort, was as the thunder of a mighty storm. The ramparts were by this time half beaten down, and the gunners more and more exposed to the assaults of the enemy.

Mid-morning came. Colonel Monroe had gone to inspect the entrenched camp, with the purpose of considering a sortie from fort and camp as a final desperate measure.

Suddenly the enemy's cannon poured out a stupendous volley, followed by dead silence.

Joscelyn, rushing anxiously to the window, to learn

what new disaster this portended, saw an officer coming from Montcalm's tent, preceded by a flag of truce and a drummer-boy. It was Monsieur le Comte de Bougainville, bearing a message from the French general to his antagonist.

Arrived at the foot of the glacis, he was met by an officer from the fort, was blindfolded, and conducted to Colonel Monro, who was still in the entrenched camp. He had come to present a demand from Montcalm for surrender, and with it the information that for some days the road to Fort Edward had been cut off by the French under Levis and La Corne, that a messenger, returning from Webb at midnight of August 4th, had been captured and killed by La Corne's Indians, and a letter from Webb taken from his body. This letter made clear that Monro need expect no help from Webb, and he was advised to surrender, making whatever terms he could. Montcalm had kept the letter, until the commandant and his garrison had amply proved their valor, and their situation had become hopeless.

Staggered though Monro was by the intelligence, his response was immediate. Still blindfolded, Bougainville was led back under an escort of grenadiers, to report that the commandant rejoiced at having to do with so generous an enemy, but would continue to hold the fort.

Joscelyn, in company with many others, had come out to see the French officer at close range as he was conducted back across the parade, for he was accounted both gallant and handsome.

It was but a brief glance that she gave him, however, for stumbling towards the fort well, near which she

stood, came a lad carrying a leathern bucket, to fill it at the well.

His face was ashen, his eyes distended, and his breath came in pitifully short gasps. A ball from a skulking Algonquin had struck him squarely in the chest. Only superhuman effort, and desperate determination had upheld him till he reached the well.

There endurance failed, and he tumbled in a heap at Joscelyn's feet.

As she stooped to him, her heart swelling with compassion, the empty bucket fell from his relaxed fingers.

"I'm spent," he moaned. "The wounded perish for water. The gunners thirst." His voice trailed off. "Send it—to—them."

It was his dying breath. Joscelyn knew that for him there was nothing to be done.

Her eyes swept the enclosure. No man, no lad, whose task was not already assigned to him, whose every moment was not fully occupied in the work of defence.

She knelt, and drew the bucket softly away from under the boy's stiffening fingers. Stepping to the well, she filled it, and bearing it carefully, that no precious drop might be spilled by the way, she went unhesitatingly toward the ramparts.

Mistress Armstrong, through the open door of the mess hall, caught sight of her passing figure. Dropping linen and shears, she rushed out, and followed after her with whirlwind speed.

"Joscelyn, child, are you mad?" she expostulated, grasping her arm. "This is no work for a maid. To go to the ramparts is to expose yourself to well-nigh certain death."

With gentle firmness Joscelyn freed herself from the clutch upon her arm. "The soldiers thirst, and there is none to bring them water," she replied simply, as though her going were a thing of course.

"Yes, yes, my dearest, but it is man's or lad's work to fetch it," protested Elizabeth Armstrong. "I cannot let you go."

"Where would my father be in time of danger?" was the dauntless answer. "At the forefront, as we both know. Shall his child and yours think of her own safety when there are errands of mercy to be done? Nay, mother. Let me go."

Pride in her daughter battling with fear for her, Mistress Armstrong made no further attempt to restrain her from her self-elected task.

Quietly, faithfully, unflinchingly, Joscelyn went from well to battlement, from battlement to well. Hour after hour, on that last day of the siege, she set her cup to the lips of the wounded, where they lay parched with the consuming thirst that follows loss of blood. Hour after hour she brought cooling draughts to the dry throats of the gunners upon the ramparts.

No idle words, carelessly spoken, were those of hers to Madame Schuyler some months ago: "Am I not a daughter of the forts,—a soldier's maid, and shall I not follow my father and my mother wherever duty to their country summons them?" Duty to her country laid its claim upon her now, and she was ready to respond, let it cost her what it may.

Before the disaster at Sabbath Day a vivid radiance had distinguished her. That had given place to a grave and purposeful demeanor, sweet, but resolute.

Her mother had not magnified the danger. Once a musket ball shore away a long black lock that the breeze fluttered out from her smooth white forehead. Once a flint-tipped arrow quivered in the deep hanging ruffle of her yellow sleeve. She brushed back what remained of the lock, she plucked the arrow from her sleeve, and went on.

Once that day she unwittingly owed her life to the far-off Mohawk maid, Bright Waters, for Hooting Owl, the Caughnawaga, hiding in the maize until he had crept nearer to the fort than his comrades, singled her out at a moment when, in pursuance of her duty, she came far out upon the bastion. His musket was aimed, his finger was upon the trigger, when, as it happened, she turned so that he saw her face. Instantly he checked his finger.

"It is the pale face friend of Bright Waters," he muttered. "From the bullet of Hooting Owl she is safe."

Night fell. The killed and wounded numbered more than three hundred of the garrison's small force. The wounded crowded every foot of space remaining in the casemates.

Twice a sortie from the forts had been repulsed with losses. The walls of the fort were breached, and could not bear the assault that threatened every moment. Next morning Montcalm, with all his artillery of thirty-one cannon, and fifteen mortars and howitzers now completely in place, would open fire. The defence, so gallant, and so long-continued, was fast drawing to its inevitable close.

When morning dawned, the remaining guns, which had kept up a brisk firing throughout the night, spoke

no longer, and in the quarters of the commandant the officers sat in solemn council.

Joscelyn, pale to the lips, and unrefreshed by the brief snatches of rest which exhausted nature had forced her to take, came again to the well-curb. She had but just drawn the dripping bucket to the top, when she observed a soldier speaking to her mother at the barracks door. Evidently he was making some request, and presently she perceived by her mother's determined attitude that she was refusing it.

Wondering what it might be, Joscelyn paused, watching.

The soldier left her mother, went to another part of the barracks, and came out with a large sheet in his hand.

Stepping to the flagstaff, he fastened it to the rope, and drew it slowly up to the top.

With a sharp pang Joscelyn saw it rise, and shake out its white folds to the breeze, for it was the emblem of surrender.

A moment later the beat of the drum was heard, and Lieutenant Colonel Young, on horseback because of his wounds, which would not permit his going on foot, rode out of the fort, followed by a few soldiers, to go to the tent of Montcalm to arrange the terms of surrender.

The bucket fell back into the watery depths with a heavy splash, and Joscelyn, prostrate upon her knees, her dark head bowed upon the well-curb, burst into a tempest of bitter weeping.

CHAPTER XII



AGAIN the drum rolled. It was the signal to evacuate the fort. Massed together on the parade was the remnant of the valiant garrison. Scattered over the fort enclosure lay the huddled forms of those who had died to hold the fortress until the last. The sick and wounded were obliged to be left behind in the vaulted casemates, under the care of the French surgeons.

Joscelyn, wan and hollow-eyed, side by side with her mother, fell mechanically into step with the drum beat. Bearing in their arms such of their possessions as they had strength to carry, and followed by Deborah, a great bundle on her head, a portmantle and a carpet-sack in either hand, they went together slowly toward the sally-port.

Bound up in shawls, in sheets, in pillow-cases, in chests, in baskets and in buckets, everyone carried what he or she could, and since what they took must be limited, they had selected the most necessary and the most precious. In frenzied haste these had been tossed together, for the time allowed for it had been short. The sutler's three-year-old daughter clutched her cherished rag doll by one limp arm. Her older brother fingered affectionately the earthenware marbles that distended his pockets. They would be a solace wherever he might be forced to go.

Joscelyn cast one lingering glance over what she was leaving behind: over the barracks which had been as

much as she had known of home since she had left Albany; over the parade and the ramparts where so many hours of restless longing had been spent; over the serene silver of the lake, that had often seemed to beckon to her, and which had withheld from her its every secret. Few had been the weeks that she had spent at William Henry, but they had overflowed with a poignancy which all the years that had gone before had lacked. Linked with the memory of the vast forests which she had traversed on her way hither, was the treachery and mutiny of the wagoners. Out across the watery expanse of the lake her father had gone, perhaps never to return. From the sally-port which she was approaching, Hugh Kennedy, her one friend and companion in this wilderness, had passed out upon a tragically fruitless errand. What had overtaken him none could say. Within these walls sorrow had for the first time visited her, and here she had learned, in part at least, how grim war might be. Alas, that she was to learn yet more fully before many hours had passed!

Knowing what hordes of hostile Indians were outside the walls, Joscelyn instinctively drew closer to her mother. Would these Frenchmen, who had assured the commandant that the garrison should have safe conduct, be able to hold in check such blood-thirsty savages, once the English left the fort?

Yet by the terms of Colonel Monro's capitulation, it had been expressly agreed that the English troops should march out with the honors of war, should go first to the entrenched camp, a half mile distant, for the night, and thence next morning to Fort Edward, under escort of French troops. With the exception of one field-piece,

which they were to retain in recognition of their courageous defence, they were to leave behind all their stores, their artillery and munitions, as prizes of war for the victors. The Indian allies of the French, summoned by the Marquis de Montcalm to a general council, had consented to the terms, and their chiefs had promised to prevent any disorder among their young warriors.

Colonel Monro was justified, therefore, in believing that what was left of his garrison would reach Fort Edward in safety, and in her heart Joscelyn prayed that his belief would prove well founded.

The moment of departure having come, the garrison was going out, heads erect, flags flying, the soldiers leading the van, and guarding the sides and rear, the leaden-hearted, haggard-cheeked women and children in a close-pressed band between them. One step beyond the sally-port, and they would be face to face with their foes, and utterly at their mercy.

At the portal Mistress Armstrong halted, as though unable to go farther.

Joscelyn whispered to her, "Courage, mother dearest. The French have assured our safety, and the entrenched camp is not far."

Elizabeth Armstrong nodded faintly, for she dared not trust herself to speak. She knew that it was not the white uniformed battalions of France that they had cause to dread now; not the regiments of la Reine and Languedoc, of Sarre and Guienne, of Bearn and Royal Roussillon, nor Canadians of Gaspé and Courtemanche. It was those red hosts, their Indian allies, Hurons, Abenakis, Penobscots, Algonquins, Sacs, Foxes, Miamis, Iowas, Sioux, from the Great Lakes, the far western

prairies, the banks of the Illinois, the Des Moines, the Detroit, nine hundred and seventy-nine chiefs and their warriors, men of the plains and forests, hunters of moose and buffalo, that struck terror to her heart.

These were leaning far out from their ranks grinning with malevolence, fingering their tomahawks and scalp-ing-knives, held in restraint only by the presence of the entire French army from falling upon the garrison, and destroying it as it filed by.

None of the departing garrison had bayonets, none had ammunition for their muskets, and Joscelyn breathed more freely, Mistress Armstrong went with firmer step, when they had left the leering savages behind.

But they had not passed far along the road before the hideous chorus of yells that burst upon their ears told that the redmen were already clambering through the embrasures of the fort, wild with the lust for plunder, and destruction of those who had been left.

Soon, borne upon the breeze, came woeful sounds from the casemates, where sick and wounded lay, testifying to the fiendish cruelty of the barbarians, whom the French soldiers either knew not how to hold in check, or dared not. But a fearful and relentless vengeance overtook these savages in the days that followed, for in many a scalp carried away by them from Fort William Henry to their villages lurked the contagion of small-pox, and he who had killed, was himself done to death in turn, and his family with him, by a foe more insidious, a death more loathsome, than tomahawk or scalp-ing-knife could mete out.

Joscelyn, her heart wrung by these piercing cries, and

daring to look back, saw an Abenaki Indian leap forth from one of the casemates, with a shout of triumph, holding aloft the gruesome trophy of a human head. Sickened at the sight, she staggered on, and turned no more.

They reached the entrenched camp, and faint with misery and grief sank down to find what rest and comfort they could, for on the morrow they must travel on foot the fifteen miles, over a rough road, that lay between them and Fort Edward.

Their rest was brief.

Mistress Armstrong had but just sunk down wearily upon the heap of luggage which Deborah had piled upon the ground, and Joscelyn had thrown herself beside her, when the savage cries that had become obliterated by distance, began to be heard again, to grow increasingly louder, to draw momentarily nearer, as though the Indians were advancing upon the camp.

This was shortly made evident. Along the margin of the lake, in a flying mass they came, leaping, running, with brandishing of reeking weapons, tossing of feathered headdresses, bristling of scalp-locks. Inflamed by lust for plunder, and thirst for rum, disappointed by what the abandoned fort had yielded them, they were bent on falling upon the entrenched camp, and spoiling the conquered of their last few possessions.

With heaving breasts, and starting eyeballs, the forlorn company of women huddled against one another, watching their swift approach.

Joscelyn clasped her mother in a tense embrace. Deborah planted herself in front of them both, her nostrils

fanning, her fists clenched, determined to protect them while she had life.

"Dey's a comin', Mistiss Armstrong," she gasped. "Dey's a comin', an we's gwine git it now, for sure."

The redskins reached the entrenchments, hurled aside the French guards, and burst into the camp by hundreds. Eyes glittering viciously, they swarmed among the tents, turning over the baggage, glaring vindictively at any who resisted them. Wherever the women and children, half-crazed with fright, cowered away from them, they became only the more insolent and intrusive.

By good fortune Mistress Armstrong and her daughter, in their situation at the farther end of the camp, were not in the direct path of the rabble, nor nearest to their first point of entrance, yet it could be only a question of moments before the Indians would find their way thither.

Whether from indifference to the fate of the English, or from fear for themselves, if their barbarous allies should turn upon them, the brutal Canadian, La Corne, and his officers, in charge of the camp, made no effort to stop the redskins in their restless prowling about, and their covetous fingering of whatever caught their fancy, or aroused their cupidity.

Around Joscelyn's neck hung her slender golden chain, and suspended from it was the locket fastened there by Catalina Cuyler, when she had parted from her. Joscelyn had fitted into this locket a tiny ivory miniature of her father, and she prized it the more dearly now that he was gone. She slipped chain and locket quickly out of sight beneath her dress lest, being seen, it should be snatched from her by greedy fingers.

The Indians were now but a few rods away. Thus far no deeds of actual violence had been done, but the British soldiery, angered by the overhauling of their chests, were beginning to show resentment, and to resist.

Instantly there was uproar and confusion. A din of shouts from savage throats, and wails from frightened children, rose on all sides. Surrounded as the refugees were, any attempt at flight would be vain. Some, rushing distractedly from one near-by point to another, sought only to escape whatever peril threatened at the moment. Others remained where they were, doing nothing to excite the Indians further.

It was this latter course that Mistress Armstrong wisely pursued.

"Nay, nay, Joscelyn, sit quiet," she begged, pulling back her daughter, who was vehemently urging her to seek the protection of a Canadian militia-man, armed with loaded musket, who was stationed close by. "Do you not see how he turns away his head when anyone implores him for aid? We need look for no help from him. Our best hope lies in being unobserved."

For a time their caution saved them from molestation, but presently the Indians surged in their direction just as a shaft of sunlight, piercing down through the giant pines, struck the pale gold of Mistress Armstrong's hair, and made a glory round her head.

More than one savage eye was caught by it, and started toward her, but a tall Huron chieftain from Machilimackinac, swifter than the rest, was at her side in a single bound. His breath fanned her face, the copper wire of his long earrings brushed against her cheek, so close he bent while he snatched out the pins that fixed

her hair in place. Down about her shoulders tumbled her fair locks in a glittering shower.

Joscelyn gave an indignant exclamation, and put out a hand to stay him. Face aflame with wrath, Deborah was ready to spring upon and claw the insolent savage for this insult to her mistress.

A warning glance from the deep grey eyes of Mistress Armstrong restrained them both. Rigid and breathless, they paused, their vigilant gaze fastened upon the Huron, ready to fall upon him should he do more than lift those yellow locks and let them stream through his fingers like liquid gold, or stroke them away from the scalp, as he was doing, his vermilion smeared cheeks wreathed in a leer of hideous significance meanwhile.

His knife was sheathed, and Mistress Armstrong, sitting immovable as a statue, and blanched to the whiteness of marble, prayed inly, and without ceasing. If for one instant courage should fail her, if for one instant she should relax her iron self-control, and show one sign of fear, however slight, that keen knife, hidden in its deer-skin cover, might be drawn, to do its horrid work. Seeing the deed, every redman on the spot would be stirred to follow his example, and overwhelming disaster would be precipitated upon the entire camp.

Cautiously the Huron chieftain gathered the golden mass closer in his palm. He was loth to let slip such an opportunity. For a moment he hesitated, but the temptation was too strong. A lurid gleam shot through the murky depths of his eyes. Slowly his hand crept to his knife, and brought it flashing into the sunlight.

In an agony of terror Joscelyn watched him finger the blade to test its keenness. It was as though she must

cry out, must try to wrest the weapon from him. But still her mother's eyes held her, still Elizabeth Armstrong, knowing how the savage is wont to test and torture his victim before he strikes the blow, did not flinch.

The Huron brandished his blade before her face, speaking derisively in his guttural tongue, until Joscelyn, finding the suspense unendurable, feared that at any instant she would shriek aloud involuntarily.

A French officer, passing in haste toward the centre of the disturbance, was arrested by the sight of the Huron's knife. He was a man of small stature, but eagle-eyed, and of commanding presence. His brow was noble, his countenance winning, and of great charm. The breast of his white uniform blazed with military orders, that bore witness to his prowess and courage in battle. This was Louis Joseph, Marquis de Montcalm, General of the French forces, hurrying through the camp to quell rising disorder wherever he found it, and to restore tranquillity.

Without an instant's hesitation, he flung himself upon the Huron, and caught at the knife.

"Has my red brother so soon forgotten what he swore to me over the council-table this morning?" he demanded reproachfully.

Recovering from his astonishment at the suddenness of the General's appearance, and his swift act, the Huron regarded him with arrogant resentment.

"The sun of the pale-face squaw's scalp has blinded the eyes of the Huron, so that he can no longer see the words on the white chief's war-paper," he answered disdainfully.

At the risk of his own life, for the savage still clasped

the glittering knife firmly, Montcalm laid his palm caressingly upon the naked arm of the Huron.

"Let my brother turn his eyes away from the blinding sun, and his sight will return," he advised him.

The Indian glared at him malevolently. "A Huron loves the sun, even when it blinds him," was his cold reply.

"Is my brother an owl, that the light should blind him?" inquired Montcalm. "Is he not rather an eagle, that can look into the sun and still see clearly?"

Throwing back his head haughtily, the Huron shook his right arm free. "The eagle has his prey. Let my white brother beware how he tries to take it from him." His clenched hand, holding the knife, shot upward.

Then the shriek that Joscelyn had repressed so long burst from her. General Montcalm, with the speed of lightning, cast himself before her mother to shield her with his own body from the descending knife. But the blow did not fall. The Huron's own will arrested it; of his own volition he suddenly deserted his intended victim, for yells of frenzied delight, ringing through the trees, told him that his fellow redmen, in their search for it, had found something that he coveted even more than the bright hair from the head of a pale-face squaw.

"Ugh! Fire-water!" he bellowed hoarsely. Sheathing his knife as he went, he bounded incontinently away in the direction of the sounds.

"*Ah, mon Dieu!* The rum barrels!" exclaimed Montcalm in dismay. He was about to hasten after the redskin, when Elizabeth Armstrong, the strain upon her self-mastery lifted at last, toppled forward against him in a dead faint.

Profound pity in his eyes, Montcalm delayed long enough to put her gently into Joscelyn's arms. Then, swift as an arrow in its flight, he rushed after the Huron, shouting imploringly to the English, "Stave in your rum barrels quickly! In the name of God, stave them in!"

treaties, and the utmost tact were employed to achieve this, but Montcalm had not retired to his tent until the camp was quiet, and orders had been given that a strict guard over it should be maintained.

The behavior of these guardians, however, had given the English ground for uneasy suspicions that they were not trustworthy, and as the night wore on, rumors were circulated that evil designs were being hatched by the savages, which might break forth at any instant, and which the Canadians in charge would do nothing to circumvent.

It was because of this that Mistress Armstrong, keeping her vigil beside her sleeping daughter, was overwhelmed with apprehension, and because of this she doubted whether they would live to reach Fort Edward.

Hour after hour she had sat as she sat now, peering out into the night, as though by so doing she might be able to penetrate to what the coming day held in store.

But at last her head drooped forward heavily, until it rested upon her knees, and she, too, slept.

Yet not for long. A gruff voice at the tent opening brought her wide awake with a start. In the grey of dawn she recognized Sergeant Steele, of the Connecticut militia. He spoke in haste.

"Get together your baggage, and your people, mistress, and join the others. We march soon."

"Has the French escort come so long before the hour?" queried Mistress Armstrong, in surprise, struggling up from her cramped posture.

"We march without them," he rejoined. "We daren't wait, for betwixt the tricky Canadians, and the red devils, there's something brewing that bodes no good.

"We're to get away whilst we can." He vanished, and Elizabeth Armstrong bent to arouse her daughter.

"Come, Joscelyn," she called, "they have summoned us to go."

Joscelyn sprang up, and together they shook awake the snoring Deborah.

From without came a babel of hurrying footfalls, shifting of baggage, muffled voices, for active preparations for the march were already in progress.

Gathering up their burdens immediately, the three left the tent.

It was by this time five o'clock in the morning. Joscelyn looked upon a camp that was in a state of wild confusion. The strain and suspense that had been endured through the night had culminated at last in panic. Baggage and children were being snatched in the greatest excitement, and a disorganized multitude were hurrying pell-mell, like a flock of frightened sheep, to seek the protection of their own soldiery, and to implore them to start without delay for Fort Edward.

The English soldiers, knowing though they did the danger of departing without an escort, and bearing in mind that they had neither bayonets nor ammunition for their muskets, were nevertheless convinced that in this flight lay their solitary hope of safety, and they were endeavoring to assemble the distracted people into order for the march.

Children torn rudely from their slumbers murmured puzzled complaints; babies in arms wailed in lusty protest; but their parents, encumbered with luggage, were concerned more for their permanent sheltering than for their temporary distress, and pressed forward with them

into the struggling pushing mass, giving scant heed to their outcries.

As she and her mother hastened to join these, Joscelyn noted that in one quarter, where stood a group of huts, containing seventeen wounded English soldiers, there was neither stir, nor indication of making ready for departure. These men, unable to endure the march, must remain behind. A strict guard had been set about them on the preceding evening by the French surgeon, and he had left them in his absence to the ministrations of an English surgeon, Miles Whitworth. Joscelyn thought with compassion of these, helpless in the midst of their enemies.

"If only the guard be strong enough, and prove faithful," she whispered to herself, but even at that very moment the guard, shouldering their muskets, turned as by a preconcerted understanding, and marched briskly away, leaving the huts utterly defenceless.

Well might Joscelyn give a startled cry, for now, as though the departure of the guard were a signal to them for which they had been waiting, the host of savages who had been lurking without, poured into the camp by hundreds, and making straight for the huts, dragged forth the wounded under the very eyes of the Canadian officers and their subordinates, who stood aloof, looking on with sardonic smiles, or cold indifference.

From the swift disposal of these unfortunates, the redskins turned upon the excited and horror-stricken refugees, demanding their baggage, and rum. Several soldiers, afraid to refuse, gave the latter from their canteens.

Hurled hither and thither in the mob, Joscelyn strug-

gled with might and main not to be separated from her mother.

"Keep fast to me," she begged her. "Oh, mother, whatever overtakes us, we must not lose one another."

Scarce able to breathe for the press, Mistress Armstrong only closed her fingers convulsively upon her child's for answer.

"Look, mother, look," cried Joscelyn again. "We are saved,—saved after all!" Her words ended in a joyful sob, for into the frantic uproar of the camp marched the French escort, punctual to the appointed hour.

Her relief was short-lived. Although Colonel Monro went immediately to the officer in command, and complained that the terms of the surrender were being violated, he was answered by a shrug, and the advice that the English renounce their baggage to appease the Indians.

It was not easy to persuade them to this. They rebelled hotly, determined to hold on to their lawful property.

Mistress Armstrong was among the first to see the folly of refusing. "If the giving up of our poor stuff is all that is required to purchase our safety, then let it go," she exclaimed, and set the example by throwing down her own.

Joscelyn promptly did the like, but Deborah resisted.

"You and Miss Joscelyn gwine need dese here cloes, Mistress Armstrong," she protested stubbornly. "I'se gwine hold on to 'em till de last."

"Would you have us killed for the sake of a few garments?" her mistress rebuked her. "Put them down, Deborah, and speak no more of it."

Well might it have been for poor Deborah if she had not waited for the command. A Miami, on the edge of the crowd, had noted with rapacious eye, the portmantle and carpet-sack that she carried, and the huge bundle set squarely atop of her gay hued bandanna.

Like a catapult he hurled himself between the bodies of those who intervened, robbed her of the hand baggage, and then snatched at her bundle.

For the fraction of a second Deborah was staggered by his onslaught, but recovering herself quickly, gripped the bundle firmly and raised it high in air, to bring it down with force upon the Miami's head.

She paid for her act with her life. She had not been quick enough for the lithe savage. He sprang back, and as in the fury of her lunge she fell forward, he buried his tomahawk in her skull.

As she gave her last cry, the war-whoop of a Christianized Abenaki from the Penobscot Missions rang out over the camp. It ushered in that cruel and relentless massacre of the English by the Indian allies of the French that irrevocably stained the pages of the history of France in the New World. To their credit be it said, that never afterward did the French employ the assistance of the Indians in battle.

The English officers tried to rally their stricken column, and lead them across the rough stretch of open ground that lay between the entrenched camp and the road to Fort Edward.

Joscelyn, and Mistress Armstrong, tossed back and forth like leaves in a storm, somehow contrived to keep their hands locked in one another's.

"If we are to die, we will die together," murmured

Mistress Armstrong, well-nigh dropping to the earth with the fatigue of the struggle.

"Yes, together," whispered Joscelyn through set lips.

Into this reign of terror dashed the Marquis de Montcalm and his trusted officers, striving desperately to stop the massacre, to release those whom the Indians had taken captive, to restore to them their possessions, to bring order out of chaos. What deeds of valor were his that day, how many hundreds he saved from destruction or captivity, how many were by his own hands wrested from their enemies, it was not given Joscelyn or her mother to know, for even as their eyes followed him, and their ears caught his protest, "Kill me, but spare the English, who are under my protection," they were torn violently from one another by separate captors.

It was the Huron, drawn for the second time by the golden glint of her hair, who dragged Elizabeth Armstrong away through the crowd. It was Hooting Owl, the Caughnawaga, who fastened his steel-like grip upon Joscelyn, pulled her out from the ranks, and away with him to the forest.



CHAPTER XIV



BY THE coming and going of a slender shaft of sunshine which struck through the narrow cleft that formed sole entrance to the rocky cavern where she was confined, Joscelyn knew that she had been captive to Hooting Owl for five days.

He had led her hither by many secret windings along obscure and broken trails on that frightful day upon which she and her mother had been torn from one another by savage hands. Her whereabouts she could not more than conjecture, but from the frequent booming of cannon, heard by day and by night, she guessed that she could not be many miles distant from Fort Edward.

This was in truth the case, and the firing which she heard was not caused, as she feared it might be, by an assault upon that fort by the French, but was for the purpose of guiding to its shelter those fugitives, who in their efforts to reach it had become lost in the forests.

Since the day that Hooting Owl had brought her to this cave, she had not crossed its threshold. Before the opening her captor sat by day looking off silently into the forest with dull unchanging eyes. At night he placed his reclining body across the opening, while she herself lay within, fast bound upon a bed of hemlock twigs by tough thongs. While daylight lasted she was free to

move about in the confines of the cavern, except when Hooting Owl left his post to gather berries to add to the store of parched corn which formed their food, or to fetch water from the brook, or wood for the small fire that burned at night. At such times she was made fast.

Beyond the fact that she was his captive, and kept secluded here, he showed no unkindness. Instead of that he had spoken reassuringly.

"Hooting Owl is the friend of Bright Waters," he had told her. "He has promised Bright Waters that no harm shall come to Oniata, if he can prevent it. He will keep his word. Let Oniata trust him."

Joscelyn, knowing that it was herself whom he called Oniata, had been heartened at this. "Will you take me to my friends then?" she had half demanded, half implored him.

At this the Caughnawaga had shaken his head. "Hooting Owl cannot take Oniata to her friends," he returned, "but she shall be safe. He will promise nothing more."

With this she had been forced to be content, and had sat day after day, seldom speaking, gazing out through the narrow cleft with sorrowful eyes, as she wondered with a sharp pang over her mother's fate, wondered whether she or her father yet lived, wondered how long she herself must remain in this chill cave, captive to a savage, whose only reason for showing her mercy was his promise to an Indian girl, far away in the Mohawk.

Joscelyn, knowing that a redskin considers it no breach of honor to break his word when the occasion seems good, stifled her fears as best she could, and main-

tained a brave and self-contained front before Hooting Owl. Not without many a prayer did she accomplish this, not without many an inward cry for protection and deliverance.

On the evening of this fifth day, as the Caughnawaga knelt, rubbing together two dry twigs to make the tiny blaze that would start the night fire, Joscelyn asked the question that had been hovering on her lips for many a weary hour. "When do we leave this place, Hooting Owl?"

The Caughnawaga made no answer. His face did not betray that he had heard.

"When?" insisted Joscelyn, coming to where he bent over the kindled faggots blowing them to brisk flame.

He raised his head slowly, and his eyes as well as his tone reproved her. "When Hooting Owl is ready, he will go. Let not his captive ask him when."

Before Joscelyn had time to reply, rashly perhaps, for her patience had worn thin with long waiting in cramped confinement, the call of a whippoorwill floated down the forest glades.

Hooting Owl did not cease from his fire making, but into his hitherto dull and expressionless eyes crept a gleam as of one who listens intently.

"Whippoorwill, whippoorwill!" it called again. Joscelyn felt the mournfulness of the wailing notes.

For a few moments longer the savage seemed to listen, but it was heard no more. He arose and entered the cave. "The sun hides his face, and the night-bird sings," he said. "Oniata must sleep." The thongs with which he was wont to bind her were in his hand.

Tempted sorely though she was to it, Joscelyn made

no resistance. She knew that it would not be wise, knew, also, that it would be quite in vain.

The Caughnawaga pinioned her upon her bed of hemlock twigs with more than usual care, and without further word left her. Could she have followed him, she would have seen him glide sinuously from tree trunk to tree trunk, a shadowy form, losing itself among the shades.

Though she could not see him, she could hear, and presently there came to her faintly the long-drawn cry of an owl. Joscelyn recalled how she had heard it once by day as she stood with Hugh Kennedy upon the ramparts of Fort William Henry, and how on that same evening the reconnoitre had set out to meet its tragic end. Could it be that this time, also, sounding though it did by night, that it portended fresh catastrophe for her country, and her countrymen, perhaps fresh griefs for herself? Could it be that her Caughnawaga captor was the bird of ill omen who gave the cry, and was himself the forerunner of disaster?

While she, helplessly bound, asked herself these questions, Hooting Owl was going unerringly toward the spot whence the whippoorwill's call had come. When he had almost reached it a figure advanced to meet him, in the homespun garb of a wagoner. It was Ambrose Jenkins.

Hooting Owl stood still to receive the white-man's paper, which he knew the redemptioner had come to bring for his French father.

He did not expect in vain. Jenkins promptly produced it from his powder-horn, and gave it, saying, "This is for the Onontio, and his great white warrior.

It will tell them much that they wish to know about the western forts."

The Caughnawaga took it gravely, and slipped it far down into his tobacco pouch. "My brother has done well," he replied, with an inclination of the head.

He would have gone without further speech, had not the redemptioner detained him by catching at his arm. With an Indian's dislike of familiarity, Hooting Owl detached himself. "What does my brother wish?" he asked with a touch of asperity.

"Fort William Henry has surrendered. So much I have heard," rejoined the redemptioner, betraying no resentment at the Caughnawaga's manner. "In that garrison was the man to whom for a time I am servant,—Captain Ralph Armstrong. With him was his wife and daughter. Does my brother know what has become of them?"

"Of the pale-face warrior Hooting Owl can tell his brother nothing. His yellow-haired squaw was carried away captive by a Huron. His daughter, Oniata, is the captive of Hooting Owl."

"And for her my red brother will be given gold or brandy, as he may desire," suggested Jenkins softly.

The Caughnawaga's face showed displeasure. "Hooting Owl does not need his white brother to tell him what to do with his captive. He will do with her as he pleases."

Jenkins saw that he had overstepped the mark. He hastened to conciliate him. "You speak truly, Hooting Owl. Your captive is yours, to do with as you wish." Then he continued, with a steely glitter in his eyes, "My brother has told me much. Captain Armstrong must

either be dead, or a prisoner, for he is not among those who have reached Fort Edward." He paused for an instant, and then added, "I shall be sent on no further errands to him, therefore, and you must come yourself to Mynheer Lyddius to receive whatever I am able to get for your Onontio."

The Caughnawaga nodded curtly. "Hooting Owl will come."

They parted, each going his solitary way, and a few moments later Joscelyn heard a faint rustle before the cave. Peering through the dense gloom, she discerned the dark bulk of the Caughnawaga outlined against the lesser gloom without. He aroused the dying embers of the fire, piled on fresh wood, and laid himself down in his accustomed place.

Captive though she was, and a savage her captor, she was glad to know that he was there, for during his absence, while she had lain pinioned and alone for the first time in the night solitude of the vast forest, the fear had arisen that perhaps he might not return, might, careless after all of his promise to Bright Waters, have left her there to die of starvation, or to be torn to pieces by some wild beast.

That which fear had not done to her, relief and gratitude accomplished. Thick tears gushed from her eyes, rolled over her cheeks, and dropped down between the hemlock needles that formed her comfortless pillow.

On the morning of the sixth day Hooting Owl was absent longer than usual upon what Joscelyn thought to be a quest for berries. He went instead to a commanding height, bare of trees, that afforded him an unobstructed view of Lake George, ten miles away as the

crow flies. Upon its bosom, distinctly seen in that clear atmosphere, was the army of General Montcalm, returning to Ticonderoga.

Shading his eyes from the mounting sun, he made sure that the fleet was in motion. Then he abandoned his post, and bounded away to the cave. The hour of his own departure had come.

By the mere manner of his entry, Joscelyn sensed that some crucial moment for herself had arrived.

He came directly to her, and undid her galling bonds. "Hooting Owl is ready now," he announced. "Oniata will arise and come."

Dangers manifold might lie before her where he might take her, that Joscelyn knew right well, but the long days and nights of confinement in the gloom of this rock-bound prison had so told upon her already overburdened spirit, that she was willing to exchange her present lot for whatever she might encounter under the open sky.

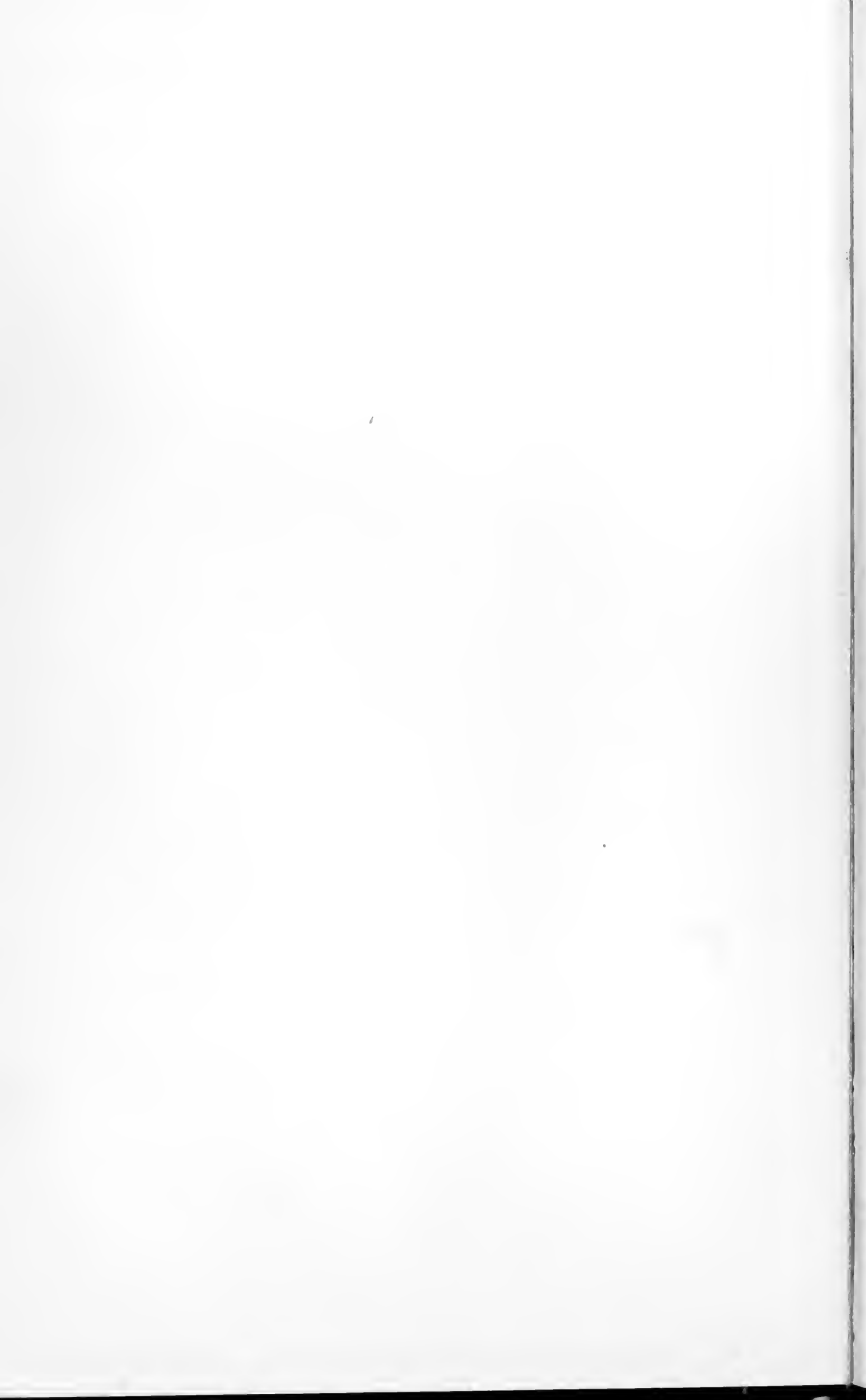
She drew a deep satisfying breath of the wholesome outer air as she passed into it. "Who knows?" she thought, with a thrill of hope, where no hope seemed. "Out where the wind blows, and the sun shines, God may send one to rescue me."

It was far from Hooting Owl's intent that such good fortune should overtake her, and it was to guard against that very possibility, that he brought her ever nearer and nearer to the lake, throughout this summer day, over trails as secret as those by which he had led her to the cave.

From the pine needles on which they trod, mosquitoes rose stealthily to torment Joscelyn's delicate skin, and for her face she fain would have had the protection of



They glided away upon the wide bosom of the lake



the mask against which she had rebelled on the morning that she had left Albany.

In the heat of the sun overhead the pines breathed fragrance, and drops of resin oozed thick upon their bronze boles.

Movement was sweet to Joscelyn after long inaction. Always her eyes were watchful, and her ears open, for sight or sound that might promise chance of rescue or escape, but never did opportunity offer, and never did Hooting Owl relax his vigilance. Once only in their progress along his chosen path they stopped beside a forest spring, to rest, and eat of the Caughnawaga's diminished store of parched corn.

The moon was rising when they reached the little cove that had sheltered Montcalm's debarking forces from the view of Fort William Henry. Gone now were the huge bateaux, the array of artillery, the countless frail birch-bark canoes that had come upon an errand of devastation. Calm and peaceful lay the lake, bathed in the moon-rays, as fair a gem as ever came from the hands of the Creator. An-di-a-ta-roc-ta, Lac du Saint Sacrement, Lake George, call it by what name Indian, Frenchmen, Englishmen might, none of the bloody battles fought by them upon its surface or its lovely shores have had power to stain for long the crystal beauty of its waters.

Over the bold bluff at its head the tide of battle had swept twice within two years. There Sir William Johnson had been victorious for the English, and there, a few days since, the Marquis de Montcalm had conquered for the lilies of France. Smoking ruins were all that remained to attest where the strong fortress of William

Henry had stood, but the mountains lifted their heads to the sky as before, and the lake between their guarding flanks mirrored the vault of heaven as serenely as though no conflicts had been waged along its shores.

Joscelyn came out upon the sandy beach with Hooting Owl, and the surpassing peace of the silvered cove, the slumbering lake, made the terrors through which she had lately passed seem so remote, that but for her bound hands, and her savage conductor, she could almost have fancied that she had but just awakened into sweet reality out of a sleep ridden by nightmares.

The voice of Hooting Owl recalled her.

"An-di-a-ta-roc-ta is deep," he said, pointing to the lake, and then directing Joscelyn to a seat upon the floor of his canoe, which he had drawn from its hiding-place under drooping branches, he continued in impressive warning, "If Oniata would journey safely, she must sit very still."

Knowing that what he said was true, Joscelyn, with a sinking heart, took the place to which he had assigned her.

In silence the Caughnawaga lifted his paddle, and to its rhythmic stroke they glided out of the cove, and away upon the wide bosom of the lake.

CHAPTER XV



*H*OOTING OWL made no haste on the journey upon the lake from its head to the portage at its foot. These thirty miles he could, by strenuous paddling, have covered in a single day, but he had his own reasons for taking his time.

When he had given his word to Bright Waters that Joscelyn should be safe, so far as he could compass it, he had construed his promise to mean that she should suffer neither death nor torture. He did not purpose, however, to lose the bounty which Monsieur de Vaudreuil had offered for English captives. Fifty golden crowns, or two barrels of brandy he might have for Joscelyn, according as he chose. It was not the brandy that he would take. He had seen the dangerous fire-water steal away the senses of too many of his brothers. He would never taste it, lest it should steal away his own, and he would be no more the clever messenger and spy, trusted by his Onontio, and his war-chiefs, and winning profits for himself. He would take the flat gold wampum of his French father as the price of this pale-face maid.

It might not be necessary that he should take her to Montreal, in order to reap this reward. Perhaps General Montcalm, the great war-chief, would pay it for her at Ticonderoga. He would try him and see. This white war-chief, brave in battle as his red brothers, was kind of heart, as Hooting Owl had learned, and he would

protect this captive, and permit no harm to come to her.

Yet Hooting Owl wished to delay taking Joscelyn to him until Montcalm should have reached the fort, for the Caughnawaga feared that some one of the Canadian militia-men, who were with the French general, and whom he had promised Vaudreuil should reach their farms in time to bring in the wheat harvest, might see his captive while he was on the way with her, and deprive him of her, and claiming her, would not only claim the fifty golden crowns which would be paid for her, but might treat her with disrespect.

So far as the message that Jenkins had brought was concerned, Hooting Owl was aware that there was no urgent haste in regard to it, for Montcalm, because of lack of provisions, and of the support of the militia, had been obliged to turn away from making an advance upon Fort Edward, and thence upon Albany which the English had feared, and for the present could not attack the western forts.

For these reasons the Caughnawaga traveled for only an hour upon that first evening, and then drew in to an islet in midstream to make his camp for the night. Here, since Joscelyn had now no possibility of escape, he allowed her to go unbound, and upon a bed of pine branches, which he arranged for her with more than usual care, she slept as she had not done for many nights.

She opened her eyes to the soft beauty of drifting mists, vanishing intangibly before the mellow gold of the rising sun, to the music of the feathered songsters on

boughs and in thickets, to the lapping and swish of gleaming water upon shelving rocks and sandy shore.

On hot stones banked round with red embers, Hooting Owl had broiled a fish. She took what he laid before her, and ate it with appetite.

Again, at the Caughnawaga's command, she took her seat in the canoe, and he made no move to bind her. Deliberately the day's journey was begun, and they progressed slowly over the broad expanse of the lake, drawing toward the tongue-like mountain on the western shore, and the high shelving mass of rock upon the eastern, between which the lake narrowed, and disappeared in its sharp bending. A large island, dome-like, and vividly green, was set like a monarch's crown among other scattered islands, and a great bay opened to the northwest. Upon this tongue-shaped mountain Levis, traveling by land, had lit his signal-fires but two short weeks ago, to show Montcalm that he had arrived with his men, and was waiting for him and his descent upon Fort William Henry.

Joscelyn, unaware of this, dwelt only on the curving shores, the verdure of the slopes, the forbidding precipices that rose abruptly from the water's edge, the inaccessible loneliness of the beetling crags.

Presently she found herself stealing among hundreds of tiny islets, as Hooting Owl guided his canoe away from dangerous reefs of rock, and from sweeping boughs of birch and hemlock. The mountains became higher, bolder, and the crystal waters were dyed with varying hues of jade and purple, rose and sapphire, white and indigo, jewel-like as they mirrored sky and cloud, verdant mountain flanks, and colored rock. The lake was

revealing its compelling charm to Joscelyn, as she had often, in happier days, longed that it might, while it mercifully hid from her, who already carried a sufficient burden, a knowledge of the disasters that man had contrived among these haunts for his fellowmen.

Ravished by the beauty of it, Joscelyn forgot for a time her griefs and dangers. They came in late afternoon to that noblest panorama on the lake, where at the right Black Mountain lifts its ruggedly inspiring steeps, where Sugar Loaf's crater-shaped top crowns the maple-grown slopes, where Elephant lies calmly sleeping across from Bloomer, Deer Leap, and Catamount on the farther side. It was these heights that Joscelyn, eager-eyed, saw first, and then her glance fell lower.

Half-way across the lake stretched a long promontory, sandy-beached, and willow-fringed. Her throat clove together, for instantly she guessed that she had reached that spot fraught for her with dreadful meaning, the spot of which her mother had dreamed, the spot which had been the scene of Hugh Kennedy's story, and her father's disastrous fate.

Recoiling from the sight of it, yet pointing it out to her companion with quivering finger, she heard herself asking, scarce of her own volition, "What is that place called, yonder, Hooting Owl,—there,—where the willows sweep the sand?"

The Caughnawaga turned his head, guiding his canoe meanwhile toward an island nearer to the eastern shore. "The pale-face has named it Sabbath Day," he answered, "but long before the white man came, the red-men called it Sabbatay."

Joscelyn hid her face, and asked no more.

On the following day they reached the portage on the east shore of the lake. Here Joscelyn's hands were bound again, and her feet tethered by thongs, so that she could not flee. With halting steps she kept behind Hooting Owl, who, carrying his birchen canoe upon his back, led her for two miles over a rough road through the forest, which ran close to a narrow circling river, whose tumbling falls, and seething rapids, gave no passage for boats until within a half-mile of the fort.

Sentries paced this road, but Hooting Owl was known to them, and as quickly as he showed his wampum road-belt, bearing his totem of the Turtle, and the emblem of Montcalm, they let him pass with his captive.

Soldiers of France were there also, conveying to the fort by road, and by bateaux for the short distance where the river was navigable, the stores and the cannon that had been brought from Fort William Henry, as spoils of war.

Joscelyn, recognizing many a familiar object among these, pursued her difficult way, keeping a pace or two only behind Hooting Owl, her head bravely lifted, her heart like a stone in her breast. She kept her eyes fastened upon the ground, that they might not meet the bold glances of the soldiers, who saw in the dazzling white and crimson of her complexion, and the lustre of her blue-black hair, a vision fairer than the ordinary.

Embarked again upon a quiet creek, the Caughnawaga paddled the half-mile farther to the fort dock, belonging to this fortress, called Ticonderoga by the Indians and the English, and Carillon by the French, which was as yet unfinished, but was to become later on one of the

most extensive and well built fortifications in the New World.

To gain its sally-port, Hooting Owl and his captive had first to pass through the stockade where the log huts of the common soldiers and the workmen upon the fort were grouped.

Challenged by the sentry at the sally-port, brought before the officer of the guard, to whom Hooting Owl must make his business known, conveyed across the parade toward the quarters of the commandant, Joscelyn thought sadly, as she followed, in what different manner she had come to Fort William Henry, and how swept bare her life was now of the cherishing love which had surrounded her then.

They had not quite reached the quarters of the commandant, when an officer came through the doorway, passed down the steps, and out upon the parade. He was small of stature, his white military coat was covered with orders, his was the air of command.

Instantly Joscelyn recognized him as General Montcalm. In that hour of her mother's desperate extremity, in the entrenched camp, while her life was at the mercy of the Huron's knife, he had suddenly appeared as a savior. Might it be, she asked herself with a throb of hope, that he would save her, Joscelyn, now?

Hooting Owl saw him also, but made no move to approach him, for though he had this captive whom he wished him to purchase, he knew that he must first go through the ceremony of obtaining leave to do so from the commandant in charge of the fort.

Joscelyn, a soldier's daughter, knew this as well as he, but her case was urgent. She was sure that he would

help her, if he could but hear her, and hear her he must before Hooting Owl could carry her yet farther away. Her hands were bound, her feet were tethered, so that she could not rush to him, to detain him, to tell her story, but voice, free voice was left her. In another moment he would be out of reach of that. She lifted it, therefore, in an intensity of mingled hope and despair.

"General Montcalm! General Montcalm!" Her appeal shrilled to him across the silent parade. "You saved my mother once. Oh, will you not save me?"

The Marquis turned impetuously upon his spurred heel. His brilliant black eyes, swift and penetrating as those of an eagle, sought and found the owner of the voice. He strode across the intervening distance, and looked into her face with softening gaze.

"Ah, yes, my child. I remember," he said, "remember you well. Your mother——" he checked himself abruptly, as though he had been about to ask a question which might be too painful for this captive maid to answer, or to bear.

His rapid speech was warm with sympathy, for Montcalm had an adored wife, and well-loved children, in his home across the seas, in far-off Candiac, and he could guess what broken ties might mean.

A moment passed, therefore, before he went on gently, "Tell me, my child,—tell me what you will."

He stood waiting, but a flood of long pent-up emotion was rising in Joscelyn, and now, though her opportunity was come, her grief was so intense that she could not speak.

General Montcalm shot a glance of inquiry at Hooting Owl. That Joscelyn was his captive he could see for

himself. But had he brought more woe than this upon her by some deed of cruelty done to her mother? He wondered, though he did not ask in words.

The Caughnawaga read his look, and drew himself to still greater height, as he answered with proud dignity: "My father sees that the pale-face maiden is Hooting Owl's captive. He has taken her fairly in battle, and has a right to lead her where he pleases. He could have given her to the tomahawk, or to the scalping-knife, but he has treated her as a sister, because of his promise to Bright Waters, the Mohawk maid. Let Oniata say whether he has kept his word."

He looked at Joscelyn reproachfully, and she was fain to bow her head in acquiescence.

Hooting Owl continued, but less as one who accuses. "My father knows that fifty pieces of gold is the price that Onontio pays for a captive. Will my father pay the same, so that Oniata may not be carried too far away from her people, as perhaps her mother has been by the Huron?"

General Montcalm regarded him gravely. Joscelyn, listening for the words that he would speak, felt a tightening at her heart, lest he should not be stirred to help her.

"Does my brother call himself a friend to Bright Waters, if he is willing to sell this maid, who is dear to her, to her enemies?" he demanded of him.

Hooting Owl looked at Montcalm with astonishment. "Can the redman return to his lodge from the war trail with nothing to show to the old men and the women of his village, either of scalps, or of captives, or the gold that the white man pays for a prisoner? Let not my

father think so. Oniata is Hooting Owl's captive, and he will not let her go without his price."

Joscelyn's imploring eyes were full upon Montcalm. Her trembling voice was vibrant with eager entreaty. "Give it, oh, I beseech you, Monsieur le Marquis, and keep me here. In Albany I have many friends who will gladly pay it back to you, who will be themselves repaid from monies of my father's."

"Nay, my child, it is not that," returned the Marquis, smiling at her reassuringly, and the smile was both tender and sweet. "I but thought to show this redman that Bright Waters would have been better pleased had he taken you to Fort Edward, where you might have reached your friends, instead of bringing you far from them, to offer you for gold."

The Caughnawaga was ready with his answer. "Bright Waters knows the customs of the redman," he said doggedly. "She will understand."

General Montcalm beckoned to his aide and secretary, Lieutenant Marcel, who had followed him, and who was standing at a few paces distant. In an undertone he dictated an order, which Lieutenant Marcel wrote down with despatch.

To Joscelyn he said, "You shall remain here, my child. I have given orders that you are to be lodged with a good woman, the wife of Sergeant le Boeuf. You shall have every liberty that I feel can safely be given to a prisoner of war. You will take no unfair advantage of these liberties, I am sure. You will render strict obedience to Manon le Boeuf, and her husband. They will instruct you as to what you are allowed to do, and as to where you may go."

There was such fatherly kindness in his tone, and rapid speech that Joscelyn could feel no awe of him. She poured out her gratitude impulsively, and from a full heart.

"My child, were my own sweet daughter in your case, I should wish that a like courtesy and consideration would be shown to her." With these words, he handed her over to his aide.

Then he addressed himself to Hooting Owl. "If my brother will follow Lieutenant Marcel, he will see that the fifty golden crowns for his captive are paid to him."

The Caughnawaga, his bargain concluded to his perfect satisfaction, followed in the wake of the General's secretary and Joscelyn to receive the reward which he felt that he deserved.

CHAPTER XVI



OUT of the wide enclosure, away from the grey stone barracks which surrounded its central Place des Armes, and towered well above the outer walls of the fort, Joscelyn was conducted by short-legged, gruff-voiced Sergeant le Boeuf.

She had much ado to keep up with his brisk stride, until he, turning to see why she did not follow with greater expedition, saw how she was hampered by her tethered feet. It took but a slash of his knife to release her, and after that she proceeded with a celerity that matched his own.

They passed into the stockade through which she had come but a half hour earlier with Hooting Owl. Here, among many others of a like pattern, stood the hut of Sergeant le Boeuf. Built of rough hewn logs, chinked with mortar, one-storied, two-roomed, it was to shelter Joscelyn, an officer's daughter, used to the comforts that garrison life had hitherto afforded. Yet after the privations and terrors through which she had lately passed, and in view of the future that might have confronted her had she been carried further by Hooting Owl, this rude dwelling, with its homely bark front, and wide open door, was to her as a peaceful haven of refuge after long continued strain and stress.

Cheer waited within its humble walls. Before the yawning fire-place, where embers gleamed red, and yellow flames leapt between the clumsy andirons, stood

Manon le Boeuf, the Sergeant's wife, stirring the contents of a soot-blackened pot with a long-handled wooden spoon. The odor of a most excellent vegetable soup companioned the rising steam, as she leaned toward the kettle and stirred. The fragrance struck with keen pleasantness upon the nostrils of Joscelyn, who had not tasted familiar food for many days.

Manon le Boeuf, short like her husband, possessed none of his leanness. The merriness in her snapping black eyes, the smiling roundness of her cheeks, the generous amplitude of her blue-clad figure, all proclaimed her as a fortunate choice by General Montcalm for the sheltering of this youthful prisoner, delivered into his hands out of the receding tide of battle. He was not unacquainted with her virtues, for it was Manon who laundered his lawn ruffles with superlative skill, Manon who performed miracles of fine darning, and again Manon who on occasion, out of purest good-will, added to his table some product of her baking art. Her good-nature and kindness were proverbial. Hence he chose her as the one most likely to make Joscelyn's lot as a prisoner as bearable as might be, when to it he added such privileges and liberties as could be granted to her.

"Hey, Manon, my wife," the Sergeant greeted her, "I bring you here from Monsieur le General de Montcalm a prisoner; one for whom we are to care in our best manner. Hast soup enough, think you, in the pot?"

Manon, having first bestowed upon Joscelyn a welcoming glance whose mellow warmth penetrated like a sunbeam to the girl's lonely heart, bent closer to the crane, and inspecting the contents of the pot with a critical eye, gave her opinion:

"For an extra mouth, Pierre, there would today be not of the most abundant, for thine appetite is great, as thou knowest, and there is Raoul, also, who for a boy of his size eats much. Then, too, there is our little Susette. As for myself, I can always share with one who needs. No doubt you will do the same. Fortunately there is always sufficient good bread, and if the young mademoiselle will take what there is for today, hereafter one can provide properly for all, since certainly the wishes of Monsieur le Marquis de Montcalm, our so noble General, must be obeyed."

In token of her good-will, Manon made haste to fill the deep and well-scoured wooden bowls which she took from the dresser, and placed in order upon the bare table. Cutting without stint from a great loaf of new bread, she took from the pile, and laid beside each bowl, a broad brown slice. With her own hands she set for Joscelyn one of the three-legged stools that ranged the walls, and motioned to her son Raoul to put up the rest.

"As for thee, Susette," she declared with a hearty laugh, pouncing upon her four-year-old daughter, and leading her to a basin in the corner of the hut, "Thy face is of a blackness, and thy hands likewise. Before thou canst eat, these must be washed."

In this fashion Joscelyn became an inmate of the family of Sergeant le Boeuf.

The meal proved ample, the supply of soup almost inexhaustible, in spite of Manon's doubts. She had rightly gauged the powers of husband and son, and Joscelyn, taking her own soup with quiet enjoyment, observed with amazement the rapidity and smacking of lips with which Raoul and the Sergeant emptied their

bowls under the industrious plying of hand and spoon. Only the little Susette held her small wooden spoon suspended idly in mid-air from time to time, while she regarded with her innocent blue eyes this strange new mademoiselle, who sat beside her, one who plainly came from a world quite other from her own.

At length, by a clatter of spoons dropped upon the table, and a vigorous pushing back of stools, the Sergeant and his son announced that for them at least the repast was finished, and that the one was ready to return to his military duties, and the other to his chores.

Joscelyn waited only until they had departed, and then, encouraged by the motherly kindness with which Manon had treated her during the progress of the meal, she went to her where she had begun her work of clearing away.

"You will let me help you, will you not?" she asked.

Manon's eyes twinkled. "But, mademoiselle, of a prisoner no work is required. Is it not so? Rest therefore. It is your privilege." After an instant's pause she went on more soberly, "Thou hast had enough to endure, no doubt, in these past days, poor child, to find rest welcome. Go, then, and sit where the breeze blows under the oak trees. Afterward, when Raoul returns, he shall take thee down to see the flowers, and vegetables in the King's Garden. That is permitted to you."

But Joscelyn persisted and had her way, working side by side with Manon, until shining order and neatness once more prevailed.

"Now there is the lace of Monsieur le General that must be repaired," said Manon, bustling for her work-basket, and a pile of jabots.

"With that, too, I can help you," Joscelyn offered, taking a seat beside her on the settle, where the light was good. "It will make me happy to do so, for I owe very much to General Montcalm."

Manon threw up her hands. "Oh, no, mademoiselle. The darning of the lace I can entrust to no one else. That must be a work of perfection."

"This tiny hole only," coaxed Joscelyn. "From the way in which I mend this, you will be able to judge of what I can do." Without waiting for permission, she selected a needle and thread, and Manon watched in trepidation while her charge took up the jabot, and set to work.

Anxiety changed to delighted admiration presently, as she saw Joscelyn's delicately expert handling of the awkward rent, for Elizabeth Armstrong had trained her daughter well in needle-craft. Without further demur she let her share in the work, and while they set their stitches fine and true, good Manon le Boeuf drew from the girl little by little something of her story.

When in the telling of it poor Joscelyn was fairly overcome, it was a wide and generous bosom to which she was drawn for consolation, and the work-roughened yet tender hand of Manon soothed her back to calmness and self-control.

A dress for Joscelyn was Manon's next care, for the garments in which she had left Fort William Henry had suffered sorely under the vicissitudes of the way. From a wooden chest she produced a roll of coarse blue homespun linen. It was not good enough, indeed no, for so beautiful a young mademoiselle, she thought, as she measured the breadths, and shaped with her scissors,

but it was the best that she had to give. At least it would be clean and whole.

Nevertheless, when the dress was completed, and Joscelyn was arrayed in it, the result far exceeded the good woman's expectations.

"It fits,—yes, that one must admit," pronounced Manon, turning Joscelyn slowly about, that she might view the garment critically from every angle, "but it is not often that one sees a figure of such a grace for fitting, nor a face to which everything, even the most simple, cannot fail to be becoming. Mademoiselle is,—what shall we say? Charming."

Joscelyn laughed outright. It was long since she had done so, but Manon's nourishing food, her fostering care, and the sound sleep, free from alarms, that had been hers in the bare inner room of the hut, had done much to bring back something of light to her eye and color to her cheek, and the normal rebound of youth to her spirits.

"There, that is right!" proclaimed Manon. "Thou shouldst laugh ever," and kissed her on both cheeks.

She congratulated herself on what she had accomplished when, before that day was over, her husband came to take Joscelyn before General Montcalm. Her adored General would see at a glance that he had given his prisoner over into capable care.

Joscelyn obeyed the summons with some agitation. What might not Montcalm have decided to do with her? A half dozen possibilities, all equally disturbing, rose before her mind.

Manon sturdily reassured her. "Have no fear, ma-

demoiselle. He is of all men the most kind. In him, moreover, is a father's heart."

Hugging these words, Joscelyn was admitted to the General's quarters.

Though he sat before a table covered with papers and maps pertaining to war, there were several small volumes there that had naught to do with such harsh business, for Montcalm, cultured, brilliant of intellect, steeped in the literature of Greece, of Rome, and of his own era, ambitious of membership in that august body, the French Academy, devoted every leisure moment to the perusal and study of such of the classics as gave him most delight. A volume of Plutarch lay open before him at this moment.

The heavily powdered wig that he wore, enhanced by its intense whiteness the lustre and blackness of the remarkable eyes which he raised when Joscelyn entered. He rose, and for the first time she realized how small he was in stature. It was to him that a savage chieftain, spokesman of Indians from Lake Superior, had said a year earlier, at Oswego, "We wanted to see this famous man who tramples the English under his feet. We thought we should find him so tall that his head would be lost in the clouds. But you are a little man, my father. It is when we look into your eyes that we see the greatness of the pine tree, and the fire of the eagle."

With the courtesy and grace that gave charm and distinction to his every movement, he handed Joscelyn to a chair near him, and dismissed the Sergeant.

"My child," he began, the natural impetuosity and rapidity characteristic of his speech subdued to the winning gentleness that came into it when he spoke to maid

or woman, "I am about to depart for Montreal. By the fortunes of war you have been torn from your natural protectors. It may be that they are no longer living. Still, do not permit yourself to be without hope. Strange things happen, under the providence of the good God," he crossed himself devoutly as he said this, "and it is far from impossible that they may be restored to you. Tell me all your story. Your mother I have seen but once, yet I should know her again. Describe to me your father, whom I have never seen."

A light rose in Joscelyn's face. "Oh, Monsieur," she cried, almost suffocated by gratitude at his kind reception of her, "Oh, General Montcalm, you do believe that they may, perhaps, be found?"

"I do indeed," replied Montcalm, and repeated, his countenance alive with generous interest, "Tell me, mademoiselle, all that you can. It shall not fall upon indifferent ears."

Encouraged thus, Joscelyn furnished him a picture, clear and vivid, of her old life in Albany, and her friends there, gave him an account of her father's disaster, and her mother's and her own experiences during the period of siege and surrender, and of the days of her captivity to Hooting Owl.

Montcalm listened intently to every word.

"And your father? You have not yet told me how I shall know him," he said, when she had ceased to speak.

Joscelyn drew her locket from concealment, opened it, and placed it in his hand. "When you have seen this miniature, it is as though you saw his very self," she said. "I begged it of my mother while we were at Fort William Henry, and by a marvel it fitted into this locket

given me by my friend, Catalina Cuyler, when we parted in Albany."

General Montcalm scrutinized the miniature carefully, looking from Ralph Armstrong's features to Joscelyn's, and back again, more than once. "But that he is man, and you are maid," he pronounced finally, "the faces are the same. You bear a most unusual likeness to your father, mademoiselle."

Joscelyn nodded. "So it has been said."

"Remembering your face as I must," continued Montcalm, with a smile, "I shall know his, if ever I see it. Do not despair. Perhaps by the grace of that good God in whom you and I trust, mademoiselle, your parents may be restored to you, as I have already said. This I can promise: whatever Montcalm can honorably do to bring this happy thing to pass, shall certainly be done."

His words at the last came with their characteristic fiery rush. He summoned his aide, Lieutenant Marcel, and with this much of comfort to sustain and cheer her, Joscelyn was taken back under his escort to Manon le Boeuf.

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CHAPTER XVII



THE hand of early Autumn had been laid upon the King's Garden. Under its touch the leaves were turning to golden yellow and ruby red. Orange and scarlet fruit tipped the branches of the rose-bushes. Wall-flowers and sturdy phlox still sent out their sweet breath upon the air, but Joscelyn knew that in a few weeks more winter would make bare and desolate this one place at Ticonderoga in which she loved to linger, and in which she took joy. The tall hedge of arbor vitæ which surrounded it would still be green, but the vegetables would be garnered, the borders of flowering plants along the ashwalks would have scattered their leaves, and ceased to blossom, and at length the white blanket of snow would envelope the landscape, blotting out all traces of the abundant life, and bloom, and fruitage, that had made a charming cultivated spot in the midst of a wilderness of ancient trees, and young saplings.

Freedom to wander here had been granted her, a boon which she dearly prized. In these sun-splashed, tree-shaded precincts she spent many a quiet hour, looking on at whichever soldier happened to be detailed for the duty of weeding, pruning, or digging about the roots of growing plant or vine.

Sometimes Raoul was her companion, come to fill a basket with fresh vegetables for the officers' table at the barracks; at others concerned solely with material for his mother's ever-busy soup-pot.

He rarely spoke to her, not being of talkative habit, and Joscelyn was aware of his proximity chiefly by a pair of black eyes regarding her solemnly and unexpectedly during momentary pauses in his occupation, or by the rustling of the leaves that marked his progress, and a head crowned by a thick stubble of rusty black hair moving slowly above bean leaves, lettuce, and thrifty cabbages.

This morning, in her endeavor to learn more of her surroundings than the stockade, the King's Garden, and the two brief glimpses which she had had of the parade and the commandant's quarters and the barracks inside the fort walls had thus far afforded her, she steadily wooed him to converse.

"What lies beyond the hedge, Raoul?" she inquired during one of his pauses.

"Woods, mademoiselle," was his laconic answer.

"On all sides?" pursued she.

"No, mademoiselle." A handful of herbs went into Raoul's basket.

"What then?" persisted Joscelyn, approaching the cabbages, where he was now preparing to cut a fine head.

Raoul's knife circled the stalk of the cabbage. "At the left, the road, mademoiselle, that goes from the fort to the redoubt of Monsieur Germain. That, and the fort ditch."

Joscelyn waited for an instant to establish these facts clearly in her mind, and then returned to her catechism. "And on the right of the garden?" queried she, her eyes fixed upon the seemingly impenetrable wall of dusky arbor vitae.

"A bank, mademoiselle, and beyond the short road which runs along its foot is the water, and two small quays. These, as mademoiselle may guess, are for canoes."

"In front of us, and at the back, are more trees, I suppose," finished Joscelyn.

"By no means, mademoiselle," Raoul made haste to answer, his black eyes rounder and smaller than ever with negation. "Behind us is a steep bank. Before us are woods, it is true, but made thin, so that those in the fort may see directly across to the farther water,—to Lake Champlain, mademoiselle comprehends." Exerting his muscles, he lifted his heavily laden basket to depart, but tarried to ask, "Why does mademoiselle wish to know?"

"For curiosity only, Raoul."

"Mademoiselle understands," added Raoul impressively, "that upon every road that goes from the fort sentries are posted, sentries with muskets, who keep guard lest any come and go who should not."

Joscelyn nodded nonchalantly. That was a matter of course.

Reassured by her indifferent air, Raoul waxed communicative, and set down his basket again, that he might have the better use of his hands in talking. "Perhaps mademoiselle has not heard of a ranger, *courreur du bois* as we French would say, called Rogers, a man most courageous, and of a daring quite incomprehensible. Close, so close to the fort he has come, at times, as to see inside the walls, it is said. Yet no one can catch him. He has carried off our sentries, he has robbed us of our cattle, he has set fire to our wood-piles, and seldom with hurt to himself, or to his men,—for he has men with

him, mademoiselle, men like himself. They come and go in twos and threes, but sometimes more, come and go like the wind, or the lightning. Can mademoiselle conceive of such rapidity?" His eyes sparkled and snapped with excitement and enthusiasm, his hands waved and gesticulated in the pouring forth of his tribute of admiration to this gallant enemy.

Pride in the prowess of her fellow-countryman colored Joscelyn's cheek, pride thrilled in her voice as she answered, "I have heard of this ranger often, Raoul,—in fact I have seen him, and he is quite as brave as you say, and has brave men with him."

"Mademoiselle has actually seen him! What a privilege!" ejaculated Raoul enviously, and then, in a burst of candor, "For myself, were I not French, as you know, I should be proud to join a man so intrepid."

"Raoul, Raoul," laughed Joscelyn, "what would your father think, if he could hear you wish that you might join his enemies!"

Raoul, flushing with chagrin at her amusement, hastened to correct her evidently wrong impression. "Mademoiselle mistakes. It is not that I would join my country's enemies. It is that I, too, long to be intrepid, to have a daring so remarkable. And," he wound up, with a rueful sigh, shouldering his basket, "the life in the fort is of a dullness for a lad of courage, especially in winter."

He went a few steps away upon the ashwalk, and then returned. "Mademoiselle will say nothing of this to my parents," he besought her, his head with its shock of rusty hair bent, his beads of eyes glittering anxiously.

"Have no fear, Raoul," she assured him. "But in any

case, they would be proud to have you ambitious for brave adventure of some sort, to have you feel such a stir of courage as you have shown to me."

Raoul bestowed upon her a glance overflowing with gratitude. "I see that mademoiselle comprehends," he said.

Joscelyn stood musing after he had gone. Here she was, as if in her own sunny garden, quite alone in the peace and loveliness of it. Hemmed in by the lines of evergreen, forts and battles seemed infinitely far away, yet the solid green fronts of the arbor vitæ walling her in reminded her that she was a prisoner as truly as though they were walls of stone, and their branches bars of iron. She had in her mind no thought of escape. Remembering the almost trackless wilderness through which Hooting Owl had conducted her, aware that, as Raoul had said, and as she had seen on her first coming to the fort, that armed sentries were stationed at intervals between fort and portage, that savages and wild beasts, famine, and a hundred dangers beset the miles on miles that lay between herself and her friends, and how vain the hope that she could ever reach them, she smiled a little bitterly. It was safe enough to allow her to walk alone in the King's Garden, unwatched, on this September day.

General Montcalm had gone back to Montreal, as he had said he was about to do, when she had seen him a day or two before. With him went his aides, Levis, Bourlemaque, Marcel, and all those regiments of France, and militia-men of Canada that had laid Fort William Henry low, to be scattered and billeted in Montreal, Quebec, and the country round them, during the winter

season. Captain d'Hebecourt, with a small, but sufficient garrison, had been left to keep Ticonderoga. The big war would sleep through the time of snows, to wake again at the trumpet call of Spring. Only the rangers of the English, the *coureur du bois* of the French, would scour the forests and snowy wastes, spying out the weaknesses of the enemy, each annoying and harrying each, in that species of daring petty warfare that had appealed to Raoul's imagination, and aroused in him a desire to be up and off with them, away from the monotony of winter in the purlieus of the fort.

Of what that monotony might be to her, Joscelyn had no conception. At Fort Frederick, where all her garrison winters had been spent, Catalina Cuyler had been her constant companion, Madame Schuyler's doors were swung wide open to her, and the gay sociability of the young folk of Albany, into whose ranks she had always been warmly welcomed, had effectually prevented her from knowing a moment's dullness, or tedium. Even had it not been for these, the presence of her father and mother would have sufficed to keep her happy and content.

Swept from her world were all her old friends, and Hugh Kennedy. Short a time as she had known him, she linked him, as though of right, with those whose love and friendship she must forever cherish.

Her spirits at low and lower ebb, tears seeking to rise, but sturdily held back, she paced the garden walks of ash, dejected and forlorn. What would she not give to have the power of flight through upper air, such as that grey gull possessed which she saw far above her,

winging its solitary way through the blue sky homeward to the Hudson and the sea.

The marshalled evergreens, with their moss-green, velvet-shadowed fronts mocked her by their prisoning beauty. Absorbed in her unhappy reflections, her gaze traveled hopelessly along them, right and left, and before her. Behind her she did not look, for there, also, she knew that they hemmed her in.

Yet, though she believed herself unwatched, she was not. Behind her, upon that side of the garden nearest to the water, the twigs of one of the smallest of the arbor vitae had for several moments been cautiously parted, and a pair of eyes, set to this aperture, observed her every movement as she walked.

Joscelyn reached the end of the path and turned.

The twigs opened wider to admit a face, bronzed and alert. They opened wider yet, by the exertion of stalwart arms, and pushing of broad shoulders, and a ranger, his helmet-shaped cap drawn well over his forehead, his deerskin jacket pulled awry by the resisting branches, stood waiting quietly till Joscelyn should lift her drooped head, and perceive him. But while he waited, he was ever on guard, and ready for instant retreat should any other enter the garden.

She was within a yard of him before she became cognizant of his presence. Involuntarily her eyes flashed upward, and seeing, she would have screamed aloud in the excess of her surprise, had not the ranger's finger on his lips, enjoining caution, caused her to choke back the cry that swelled her throat.

"Hugh Kennedy! Hugh!" she breathed, softly.

"Joscelyn, poor lass; poor prisoned lass," whispered Hugh, taking her hands.

"I feared that you were dead," she told him brokenly. "Dead or captive, as my father and mother are."

"Free, Joscelyn, as you see, dear lass. Free to come and save you when the time is ripe."

"'Tis ripe at any time for me," murmured Joscelyn.

"I would that it might be now," returned Kennedy, whose gaze divided itself between the girl's face and a watchful oversight of the entrance to the garden. "But winter is the time most in the ranger's favor. Then the vigilance of the soldiers is relaxed, the chance to elude the sentries is increased. Can you be patient, Joscelyn, till then?"

"'Twill not be hard to be patient with hope to shine as a star before me," answered she with radiant face. "Tell me, though," and her voice grew wistful, "Have you heard nothing of my parents? If only I might know what has become of them, even if it should be the worst!" She ended trembling, and he could see the tears veiling the gold-brown of her eyes.

"I would that I were the bearer of good news," he answered gently, "but I have seen and heard naught of them, though I have looked and asked, wherever I have been. Yet who knows? At any time I may come upon one or other of them, even as I have come upon you, Joscelyn, in this garden, where I had never dreamed that I might find you."

"And where, if you should be found, it might mean instant death to you," whispered she, in sudden panic. "Oh, Hugh, do not linger here for my sake, much as it joys me to see a friend's face. The danger is too great.

There is so much that I would have asked you,—how you got safe through with Colonel Monro's message to Fort Edward? How it was that you could not return? A hundred questions! But I must not ask them now. At any moment the sentry might pass, or someone else might come, and you be discovered." She pushed him toward the hedge of evergreens as she spoke. "Go, pray go, before it is too late."

"'Tis too late now," returned Kennedy in a cautious undertone. His ear, forest trained, had caught the sentry's footfalls on the road at the other side of the hedge.

They were still at some little distance, but for Kennedy to go from the King's Garden, out upon the road, which ran straight and undeviating for a long way, would instantly disclose him to the armed sentry.

He scanned the garden rapidly for some hiding-place until danger should be past. Several huts for tools and implements were scattered here and there, but all too far away for him to reach in time.

His baffled glance came back to Joscelyn. "Go, Joscelyn, go quickly. Do not be found here with me," he whispered, fearful of the consequences to her.

Joscelyn gave no heed. Afraid to speak, lest by so doing she should attract the attention of the sentry, whose footsteps were drawing dangerously near, she looked distractedly from one point to the other, in the vain hope that she might discover some avenues of escape for Hugh.

Her eyes coming back to him, she was surprised to detect mingled resolve and relief in his face.

They were standing by an enormous log, part of the

trunk of some giant of the forest, which had been felled when this plot of ground had been cleared for the King's Garden. It had been left lying to serve as a resting-place in lieu of bench. Beside it was a high pile of withering weeds, uprooted from among the vegetables, and not yet carried away to be burned.

Kennedy dropped quickly to the ground. Burrowing swiftly into the centre of the mass of weeds, he pulled them closely over him, so that no part of him was left visible.

Her knees shaking under her, Joscelyn sank down upon the log. The sentry was now less than a rod away. If he should look in through the hedge, and by the slightest movement or sound Hugh should betray himself, all would be over.

It was seldom that the sentry paused on his beat, and once he had passed it would be some time before he returned. She waited, praying that he might not stop now.

But Private Gascoigne Dumont had fancied that the sound of voices had been brought to him dimly on the September air, and when he arrived at a point near to where Joscelyn sat, her heart beating quickly, her eyes now upon the weeds, now upon the hedge of evergreens, he stood still, parted the branches, and looked through.

To his observant gaze the King's Garden was empty, except for the girl upon the log in the sunshine. It was evident that his ears had deceived him.

And yet, perhaps not, after all, for coming toward him upon the road that led away from the stockade was

Raoul, the son of his superior officer, swinging a rope, and whistling merrily as he came.

Private Dumont, seeing Raoul, surmised that his errand was to the garden, and was convinced that it was to him that the English prisoner had been speaking a little while before. Satisfied that all was as it should be, he resumed his way.

There was a slight stirring among the weeds. Joscelyn bent low. "Lie quiet, Hugh," she warned, "The boy Raoul comes."

Without pause in his gay whistling, Raoul advanced directly to the pile of weeds.

Hiding her dismay and anxiety as best she could, Joscelyn arose hastily, and took a position between the boy, and the spot where Hugh lay concealed.

"What work have you come to do now, Raoul?" she asked sweetly.

"To bind the weeds in bundles, and carry them away to burn them in the ditch yonder."

"'Tis a great pile, is it not?" went on Joscelyn, without making way for him, and wondering desperately what stratagem she might use to divert him so as to give Hugh opportunity to escape.

"Great indeed, mademoiselle," agreed Raoul. Swinging his rope carelessly, he moved toward the end of the pile farthest away from Joscelyn. He did not wish to disturb this pretty young mademoiselle, where she stood, but his work must be done.

Still searching her mind for some expedient that would take him away for a few moments before he could lay hands upon the weeds, Joscelyn's roving glance fell upon a cedar at some rods off, hung with

the orange and scarlet berries of the bittersweet. It stood beyond a patch of corn. If Raoul could be persuaded to go to it, it might afford Hugh his chance.

Bent upon the accomplishment of his task, Raoul stooped to the weeds.

"Before you commence, Raoul," began Joscelyn in feverish haste, "will you not get for me a bunch of those strange berries, on the cedar tree yonder? That one, beyond the corn. I would see them closer."

Raoul, looking to where she pointed, let go the weeds that he had grasped. "But mademoiselle may help herself to the berries. Why not?" he assured her with a wide gesture of his upturned palm.

"Nay, Raoul, you forget that I am a prisoner, and dare not help myself; but you can get them for me, can you not?"

"Mademoiselle speaks truly. I had forgotten. Certainly the weeds can wait, while I go to fetch the berries."

He had dropped his rope, and was speeding away, when Joscelyn called after him: "Those in the cedar tree beyond the corn, Raoul, are the ones which I especially desire."

"Mademoiselle shall have them, of course," he replied, without pause or turning.

"Now, Hugh, now," whispered Joscelyn, her lips close to the smothering weeds.

Kennedy lost no time in freeing himself from the leaves, and stalks, and earthy roots. Prone at Joscelyn's feet, for he dared not rise, lest Raoul should turn for some reason, and discover him, his words rushed out

swiftly. "In December I'll come with plans for your escape. Walk daily in the garden at the sunset hour."

Her promise given, he began to wriggle serpent-wise toward the hedge, and Joscelyn followed, taking care to keep herself between him and the standing corn that hid Raoul from view.

The hedge reached, Kennedy parted the lower boughs of the evergreens. He lifted his eyes to Joscelyn's in unspoken farewell, and still without rising to his feet, crept out through the fragrant masses of living green.

Joscelyn dared not open the boughs that had closed after him to see whether he went on in safety, nor could she hear his moccasined feet as they bore him rapidly away.

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CHAPTER XVIII



SERGEANT LE BOEUF sat before the door of his hut, cleaning his musket. Joscelyn, on the bench against the hut wall, basking in the grateful warmth of the sun, looked on idly at a familiar process, which she had observed many times in the past.

Not so with little Susette. To her it was an ever new and most absorbing one. Close to her father's knee, her rosy face pressed so near to his work, that at times she hampered his free action, she followed his every movement with fascinated gaze, and in season and out of season offered him whatever she thought might be of service to him, in polishing the barrel, oiling the lock, or cleaning the wood. Plainly her infant fingers itched to take part in the work itself, and the Sergeant had much ado to restrain her.

There was mischief in those fingers, too, for in an instant while his head was turned in reaching for a bit of rag, she made bold to ram into the priming-hole a tiny plug of wood. She was not so quick but what he caught her at it before she had shoved it too far in.

With a sharp reproof, he took her baby fingers and slapped them till they smarted. She wept bitterly, and Manon, hearing her outcry, came quickly to fill the doorway with her sympathetic presence.

"What ails thee, my angel?" she inquired, holding out motherly arms.

"Give her no petting, Manon," commanded Pierre

le Boeuf brusquely. "She has been imp, not angel. A nice mess it would have been for me had I not caught her in time. Look you," holding up the scrap of wood which he had succeeded in prying out, "This her naughty fingers pushed into the priming-hole, stopping it up with a completeness. Consider the result, had it become necessary for me to fire my musket. It would have been a thing impossible."

The look of black disapproval which he cast upon his infant daughter as he spat this out, made her wail afresh, and hide her head in her mother's ample skirts as a place of secure refuge until her hour of disgrace should be past.

"Pierre, my husband, be not so harsh with the innocent one. She meant no evil. It was that she did not understand." Stooping, she uncovered Susette's tear-stained face. "See, my infant," she soothed, wiping the child's cheeks dry with her apron, "Thou must never touch thy father's musket. It is a danger most enormous to meddle with it. Go now, throw thy arms about thy father, and promise to do so no more. He will forgive thee. He already holds out his hand to thee."

Filled with remorse, Susette flung herself upon her father's breast, and was absolved.

Manon, her household restored to harmony, returned to the kettle of soup bubbling over the fire, which, in the goodness of her heart, she was preparing for those sick and wounded prisoners who lay miserable and half-nourished, in the fort hospital on the bluff of the promontory. Enemies to her country they were, to be sure, but they were suffering, and today she had gained permission from Monsieur le Commandant to make the

soup, and to go herself to feed it to them. "Who knows?" she thought, "One may be able to speak a word of comfort to them, or at least of cheer."

Her plan for this was doomed to disappointment, however. The soup was done, and steaming in the pail in which it was to be carried; the cup and spoon with which she meant to feed it to them were laid ready, and she herself was preparing to start upon her errand of mercy, when Raoul came in with a basket of soiled linen from the officers' quarters, and the request that the contents be laundered in time for regimental mess.

"Alas!" cried Manon, when her son appeared with his load, and she had received the message, "Who now will go to feed the sick? For me there will be no time. Thou, Pierre," she went on, addressing her husband, who had finished cleaning his musket, and sat admiring his handiwork, "or Raoul, couldst carry the soup to them, it is true. But to feed them? No. You are both of a clumsiness in handling the spoon, except to feed yourselves. Then all goes excellently. For this it requires a woman's hand."

"Manon, oh, Manon," besought Joscelyn, on her feet at once, "let me go in your stead. I assure you I can do it well." Back to her memory rushed those hours of siege at Fort William Henry, when she had held the cup of water for many a fellow-countryman while he quaffed. "Let me, Manon. Let me, Sergeant le Boeuf," she urged, eager for the service.

"Dost think she might, if there is thyself to bear the pail?" asked Manon of her husband. "Surely it could be allowed that she should go with thee on such an errand. Surely Monsieur le Commandant would not object."

"Mademoiselle Joscelyn has privileges out of the ordinary, granted to her by Monsieur le Marquis de Montcalm himself," returned her husband promptly. "There can be no objection, especially as I myself will be there." He was the more ready with this answer, because he had dreaded the task of feeding the helpless sick, and yet had felt unwilling to fail his wife in any request that she might make of him, being as he was, a devoted husband, and a kind father, in spite of brusqueness of manner, and sometimes hasty temper.

"I may go, then, Manon! I may go!" cried Joscelyn, and sprang with alacrity to seize cup and spoon.

In the hospital on the bluff, where the pure air from the lake floated in at the open windows, those English prisoners were gathered who had suffered from wounds received in battle, or from drinking the foul water in the fort cisterns, or brought to the fort by Indians from time to time, to receive the reward offered for captives, had been victims of preceding savage cruelty and torture.

Too ill to be confined in prison cells, they lay here, their beds merely wooden boxes, packed with hemlock twigs, bare of sheets or pillows, their raiment that in which they had first come to the fort, and in this comfortless state they must remain until they should recover enough of health and strength to endure imprisonment in the dungeons of the fortress.

Joscelyn, coming in from the bright invigorating air of early autumn, looking upon these wretched human beings, wan, wasted, hollow-eyed, her own countrymen, to whom she was about to minister, felt a thrill of intense compassion for them. Among these unfortunates

she recognized none, least of all that ghostliest sufferer, at the end of the room farthest from her, who lay propped higher than the rest upon his bed.

Yet it was he, who, at her first entrance, had struggled a little higher still, his face illumined, his eyes distended in incredulous amazement, as of one who sees unexpectedly brought before his vision that which his soul has yearned for through weary days and weeks of loneliness and dread.

In an instant he sank back, and slipped himself lower on the hemlock twigs, his joy concealed, his quivering desire to have her come to him controlled by a strong effort of the will, for he feared that if he betrayed recognition of her, that the enemy soldier, who accompanied her, might hinder her approach. This he knew he could not bear, not now, while he was weak and ill, not now, after the interminable days of anguish of mind, as well as body, that had been his, confined in this place, haunted by memories of those he loved, torn by fears for them, and whom he had come to believe he should never see again. How could he have conceived it possible that Joscelyn should come, blooming and beautiful, to him in his imprisonment? He knew that it was no overwrought fancy of a sick brain that he beheld,—it was her very self. What could it mean, but that she, like himself, was a prisoner, for how otherwise could she be in this French stronghold of Ticonderoga?

Ralph Armstrong, wreck of Sabbath Day, shifted himself painfully upon his bed, as he schooled himself, before she should come to stand beside him, her father.

She advanced slowly, bending to this one, and to that, supporting languid heads, while she put to dry lips the

cup which Sergeant le Boeuf filled for each from the bounty of his wife's pail.

Two beds more remained before her father's famished eyes could rest upon her, then only one by which she must tarry. At last the moment was come when she stood by his own. Now she would see and know him, he thought; now none could keep her from him. He lay waiting for the cry of astonishment and joy that she would give at sight of him.

But she, his Joscelyn, his dear maid, who, he could have sworn, would have known him anywhere, under any circumstance, looked down upon him with no faintest gleam of recognition in her eyes, quietly held out the cup to Sergeant le Boeuf for its refilling, and with no stronger emotion than compassion written on her face, slipped her arm beneath his head, and raised it, that he might take the draught she presented.

Stricken dumb by pained surprise, he drank mechanically, and as he did so, there came the realization of how great a havoc suffering and disease must have wrought in him, where it could hide him thus effectually from eyes so loving, so discerning as hers, and that it was by no means strange, perhaps, that his child, who had never seen him, save in stalwart ruddy health, should fail to recognize him now. Nevertheless he was convinced that his identity must presently dawn upon her. Therefore, holding himself still in check, he drank passively, and in silence, his eyes fixed intently upon her countenance meanwhile, watching for her awakening, though he knew that he could not wait long.

He had almost drained the cup before he perceived that the pitying gentleness of her expression was being

replaced by one of puzzled scrutiny. Her dark eyes narrowed, her delicate brows contracted, as though she asked herself whether she did not see in the one before her a likeness, real or fancied, to some other being, familiar and beloved.

It was enough. Ralph Armstrong pushed back the cup, with that whimsical smile curving his thin lips that she had known well, had seen often, in days past.

"A good draught," he said, "and all the better from my sweet maid's hand."

A low inarticulate cry answered him, a cry which held as in a chrysm the long pent-up, the now overflowing emotions of Joscelyn's heart. Down dropped the emptied cup, as she caught his head to her breast. Less by her kisses and her enfolding arms, than by the single stroke with which she smoothed back the matted hair from his damp forehead, did she give him to know what it meant to her to find him. In that touch, light as the brush of a swallow's wing, all her love, her long yearning, her ecstatic happiness found vent.

Sergeant le Boeuf, shrewd of countenance, brusque of manner, was nevertheless a man of heart. Mademoiselle had discovered in this English soldier one who was dear to her. Not on the instant would he check the tide of free speech between these two, and yet, presently he must remind them that they were prisoners, and as such, subject to the regulations which governed them, except by special privilege to be granted by his superior officer.

By swift eager questions, and broken answers, Captain Armstrong was able to learn something concerning his wife's capture, and of his daughter's before Sergeant

le Boeuf touched Joscelyn's elbow. "Mademoiselle," he reminded her significantly, "Our little task is finished, is it not? We can give the good report to Manon that the sick have done justice, the most complete, to her excellent soup."

"Let me stay a few moments, only a few moments longer," implored Joscelyn. "Oh, Sergeant le Boeuf, it is, as you see, that I have found my father."

"That I observe," returned the Sergeant, "and the natural feelings of mademoiselle and her father I quite understand, yet, without permission from Captain d'Hebecourt, the commandant, I cannot allow prisoners to communicate with one another, especially in English." Despite the kindly glance that he cast upon her as he said this, his attitude was of such firmness, that Joscelyn knew that argument and entreaty alike would be useless.

She leaned over her father, and kissed him on the lips. "I will come again," she assured him, as his wasted fingers clung to hers, "I will surely come again."

She could not be certain that it would be so, but she left him with that fixed hope in both their hearts.

Not a word had she said of her meeting with Hugh Kennedy in the King's Garden, nor of his promise to return in December, and rescue her, but she was already fully resolved that when the young ranger came again, she would tell him that he must go back alone.



CHAPTER XIX



MANON stood over the tub outside her dwelling, rubbing the soiled linen that Raoul had brought. The soft cooing of a flock of pigeons, strutting and sunning themselves upon the roughly shingled roof of Sergeant le Boeuf's log hut mingled pleasantly with the crisp splashing that Manon's large hands made in the water of the tub. Occasionally, one or other of the pigeons, secure in its trust in her, fluttered down to perch lightly upon Manon's head or shoulders, and this proof of affectionate confidence given, winged its way back to its companions.

Upon the bare earth, a yard or two away, sat Susette, struggling to remove the clothing from her rag doll, so that she might imitate her mother's occupation, but Manon had taken the precaution to sew the doll's clothing firmly to its body when the toy was made, and so the child's efforts were fruitless.

Determined not to be balked of her final purpose, Susette scrambled to her feet, ran to the tub, and before Manon, her hands occupied in wringing out a garment, could prevent her, she plunged doll and all head foremost into the suds.

Manon dropped the garment hastily into a basket

on the ground beside her, and rescued the doll with her soapy fingers.

"But, my Susette," she reproached her daughter, holding before her gaze the dripping doll, "wouldst drown thy poor infant? Thou art not a good mother. How wouldst thou like to be stuck head first into the tub?"

Susette, startled at such a suggestion, shrank back. Plainly her mother had not understood. She was about to retire shamefacedly around the corner of the hut, when she espied her father and the young mademoiselle approaching along the road from the hospital. Dangling empty from her father's hand was the pail which had contained the soup.

Fired by a desire to seize it from him, and carry it the rest of the way herself, Susette dropped her doll in the dust, ran to him, and laid hold of the handle.

While Sergeant le Boeuf, willing to oblige his little daughter, tarried to adjust the pail upon her arm, Joscelyn outstripped him, and reached Manon first.

Standing at her tub, with her back to the road, Manon was suddenly made aware of Joscelyn's arrival by a pair of arms thrown around her from behind, and a voice thrilling with delight at her ear.

"Manon," it said, "if you could but guess what it was that you did for me, when you allowed me to go in your place to feed the sick!"

Whirling herself about, Manon beheld the girl's transfigured face. "Mademoiselle, my dear mademoiselle," she exclaimed in utmost astonishment, "what can have happened that thou dost look like this? It is as though thou hadst seen one of the blessed saints!"

Half laughing, half sobbing, Joscelyn answered. "Had I seen one, it would not have rejoiced me near so much, for think, Manon, think; there among the sick I found my father. A ghost almost, so thin and ill he is, but living,—able to know me, and to speak to me. Is not that more cause for happiness to me than if I had seen a saint, however blessed?"

"Mademoiselle's father!" echoed Manon le Boeuf, throwing up her hands. "Was not that enough to make mademoiselle faint from pure joy!"

"Nay, not that, Manon," said Joscelyn, "but at first, conceive of it, I did not know him, he was so sadly changed. He needed to speak and to smile, before I could tell who it was that by God's mercy I had found."

"By God's mercy, indeed," agreed the good woman devoutly.

"And by your aid, kind Manon," pursued Joscelyn, her eyes shining with gratitude. "But for your soup, and the chance given me to go in your stead to feed it to the stricken ones, who knows whether I should ever have found him?"

"Well, also, that the soup held out," interposed the practical minded Sergeant, who had only just reached the two, due to many stops by the way to replace the pail upon Susette's arm to her satisfaction. "One good overflowing cup the less, and we should have turned back before mademoiselle came to that last bed where her father lay. Conceive of the misfortune to her that that would have been!" He rolled his shrewd little eyes upward, as though calling heaven to witness to the magnitude of such a disaster.

"And you will send more soup another day, will you

not, Manon? Oh, if you could see how sorely it is needed! And I may go with you, may I not,—may see my father again,—see him often?” Joscelyn turned from one to the other beseechingly, for she knew that her last request depended for its granting upon Captain d’Hebecourt, the commandant.

“On my own account, I can answer at once,” said Manon with decision. “The soup shall not be lacking. Every day your father shall have an ample portion.”

Sergeant le Boeuf spoke with more deliberation, but there was kindly sympathy in his tone.

“Mademoiselle must understand that the situation is now different. It involves the communication of one prisoner with another, which, as I told mademoiselle at the hospital, is not permitted without the consent of the commandant. Had I known that mademoiselle would discover her father among the prisoners, I should have been unable to allow her to go with me today, before I had obtained this permission. Whether or not he will give it now, is, of course, quite uncertain.”

Joscelyn’s countenance fell. Much as it would mean to her to see her father, she knew that in his sick state it would mean even more to him.

Seeing this change come over a face which she had grown to love, Susette nestled to Joscelyn’s side, and slipping her tiny hand into hers by way of consolation, looked up at her innocently, in an effort to comprehend why she was grieved.

Closing her fingers over Susette’s, Joscelyn took a step toward the Sergeant. “You will do your utmost to persuade him, Sergeant le Boeuf, will you not? Think how it would be, if instead of myself and my

father, it were a case of yourself, and this little Susette, who were prisoners."

Beseeching eyes fixed on his, she awaited his reply, and Susette, realizing only that in this situation there was something which her beloved mademoiselle desired, which her father might have power to grant, relinquished Joscelyn's hand to tug insistently at his.

Manon, the warm-hearted, added her plea, also. "Yes, Pierre," she urged, "think if it were our little Susette. Thou wilt do thy best, doubtless, to obtain consent."

"I will say all that is possible," promised Sergeant le Boeuf, erect of spine, shoulders set sturdily, holding fast to Susette's small hand. "Mademoiselle must understand, however, that it is not permitted to attempt to persuade one's commandant, but I will do my utmost to make for mademoiselle the strongest of appeals."

"You will ask him soon?" begged Joscelyn, for suspense was painful.

"This afternoon, mademoiselle, before the sunset gun."

With this Joscelyn was fain to be content.

Captain d'Hebecourt, smoking placidly over the latest advices from Montreal, received Sergeant le Boeuf's information with a measure of surprise, and Joscelyn's request that she be allowed to visit her father he greeted with a dubious smile.

"Much trouble sometimes arises from these communications between prisoners, Sergeant. You present the girl's case movingly, and General Montcalm has instructed me to accord her what privileges are possible.

It is true, moreover, that her father is ill, and under such circumstances one should show mercy."

He sat in silent reflection, his forehead furrowed deeply, when he had said this, and Sergeant le Boeuf, in the attitude of attention, had the wit not to break in upon him by any further plea while he made his decision.

It came with a clearing of the sallow brow, and a shrug of the sloping shoulders. "She may see her father at your discretion, Sergeant, but she must not be left alone with him, nor can she speak to him except in French. It may be that neither of them understand the language, but I will not risk having them communicate with one another in English."

"On the contrary, Monsieur le Commandant, Mademoiselle Joscelyn speaks French not too badly. It is not unlikely, therefore, that her father does the same."

The commandant took up the sheet of paper that he had laid down when Sergeant le Boeuf had been admitted. "See to it, Sergeant, that no mischief comes of it," he warned his officer, and with this grudging consent, he dismissed him.

Many times since she had come to Ticonderoga, Joscelyn had been thankful for what knowledge of French she possessed, but never so much so as when Sergeant le Boeuf returned, and told her the result of his visit to Captain d'Hebecourt. She had acquired the language in Albany, somewhat unwillingly at first, under her mother's tutelage, but spurred on to greater interest in it before long by Madame Schuyler's encouragement, and by the added incentive of joining with Catalina in its study. Now that it was to be her

sole medium of interchanging speech with her father, she was a thousandfold grateful for every word of it that she had made her own.

The fact that her father lived, that he was no farther away from her than the hospital upon the bluff, that she might see him, and speak with him at no distant time, lifted her spirits to that pitch in which she already visioned his complete restoration to health, and his and her own release from prison.

The voice of Manon broke in upon her thoughts. "How fortunate it is that mademoiselle speaks French. When she goes with me, hereafter, to see her father, she need not be silent as would otherwise have been the case, though naturally she would prefer to speak to him in English."

"'Twill matter little to me what language I must employ, Manon, since I can see him, and talk with him," replied Joscelyn with a radiant smile.

"True, mademoiselle," agreed Manon, folding a freshly ironed shirt with care, "through any tongue that the good God has given to man, the heart can speak."

CHAPTER XX



THE large stone farm-house of Captain Armstrong, almost manor-like in the dignity of its outward aspect, and the size and number of its pleasant rooms within, lay for the most part darkened and untenanted in the midst of its broad acres, a few miles up the Mohawk Valley beyond Schenectady.

In the fire-lit kitchen, at the rear of the house where the farmer had his quarters, Giles Coles was enjoying his place on the high-backed settle before the hearth, for the September evenings were cool. His day's work in the fields and orchards done, he complacently looked on through the smoke of his pipe at his wife and half-grown daughter, who were busily clearing away the dishes and remnants of the recently eaten meal.

"Naught so comforting as good hickory logs on a chill evening," commented Giles, stretching his feet in their well greased cowhide boots nearer to the yellow blaze.

"Ay," agreed his wife, her round face shining red at him from the steam of her dish-washing. "And if Jenkins had as good sense as you, Giles, he'd be on settle too, instead of up loft yonder."

But Ambrose Jenkins, in his loft chamber, chill it is true, yet in other respects by no means comfortless, was finding a satisfaction of a different order, and one more to his taste, than any comfort that crackling logs or curling smoke of pipe could yield him.

By a tallow candle, burning with unsteady light in its low iron candle-stick, he was examining the characteristics of the handwriting on a half-dozen sheets of paper spread out upon the bare ash table before which he sat. Nothing, not even the slightest variation, escaped his minute and careful scrutiny.

These sheets were old letters of instructions written to his farmer by Captain Armstrong while he was still stationed at Fort Frederick, and Jenkins, for his own purposes, had purloined them from among a pile of others in the kitchen chimney-cupboard, where Coles had placed them, once he had read them, and digested their contents.

Finishing his inspection, Jenkins took up a thick shingle that lay beside him, and began to copy the handwriting with the utmost accuracy. He continued, until he had satisfied himself that it would be impossible for anyone to tell the difference between his copy and the original.

This much accomplished, he drew toward him a sheet of paper, such as Captain Armstrong was accustomed to use in his private correspondence, and began to indite a letter to himself, purporting to be from his master. It was not of great length, but it gave Jenkins concise directions as to how he should collect, and send to him by the Indian messenger who would come for it from time to time, whatever information might be of use to the French, and promising him tempting recompense for such services.

The redemptioner folded this skilfully forged letter, sealed it, and waited until the wax had hardened. Then he broke the seal, and opened and refolded the

letter several times, so that it might have the appearance of having been read and handled. Knowing that such a letter would have traveled to him buried in the tobacco pouch of the Indian to whom it had been entrusted, he took out his own tobacco pouch, and stuffed the letter down into the very bottom of it, to remain there until the morrow.

Taking out his pocket-knife, he scraped from the face of the shingle the tell-tale traces of his practisings. This done, he threw the bit of wood into a corner, and with all evidences of his guilty occupation disposed of, he blew out the remnant of candle that was guttering in the socket, and threw himself fully dressed upon his bed. That day, at noon, Coles had given him notice that he must be astir early next morning to drive in to Albany, with a load of farm produce, for the Captain's factor, and though opportunity had come to him at short notice, he was prepared to make use of it.

A half-hour past the stroke of twelve on the following day, Ambrose Jenkins, his cloak well brushed, and hanging neatly on his shoulders, his coarse felt hat set squarely on his skull, approached the town mansion of Colonel Schuyler, and lifted the polished brass knocker upon the side door. It fell with a heavy clang under his hand.

Caesar came, to say firmly, when the redemptioner requested admission to his master, "Taint no likesomness de Cunnel's gwine be able to see you. He most pertikler occupied in his office room wid General Johnson and General Abercrombie."

Jenkins did not betray the satisfaction that it gave him to hear who companioned Colonel Schuyler. He

could have desired no better audience for his purpose, but he merely said, "If Colonel Schuyler knew my business, he would see me. 'Tis of great importance."

Caesar looked him over with a judicial air. "'Portance to yourself, or to de Cunnel?" he inquired with considerable condescension.

"To the Colonel, and to those with him."

Conceiving that this might be possible, unlikely though it seemed, Caesar waved his hand toward the garden settle that stood outside the door. "You kin set yoursef, whilst I askes de Cunnel."

Leaving Jenkins to felicitate himself upon having arrived at so auspicious an hour, Caesar disappeared. In a moment he returned with the message that Colonel Schuyler would see him, but he must make his business brief.

Ushered into a large and sunny room in the south-east corner of the house, the redemptioner confronted these three men, the most important in the affairs of Albany at that time: Colonel Schuyler, looked up to and respected in every quarter, active in public business, friend to the Indian, staunch patriot, upholder of the British Crown; General Sir William Johnson, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, that remarkable man whose influence over the Five Nations of the Iroquois was the greatest factor in holding back the inroads of France upon the English Colonies in America; General Abercrombie, at present in command of the British Forces in and around Albany and the northern lakes, a martinet in military matters, narrow-spirited, and unable to conform to the elastic methods of warfare suited to the country and the people of this New World.

They were engaged today in discussing the French and Indian situation.

Abercrombie was ill-pleased, and showed it rather plainly, at being interrupted in the midst of the expression of his opinions by this roughly dressed farm servant, just brought in.

Colonel Schuyler, composed and dignified as usual, sat at the end of the table facing the door.

Jenkins, revolving his hat between his lean fingers with a deprecating air, awaited permission to speak.

"Your business, my man?" the Colonel inquired.

Before replying Jenkins pulled out a shabby wallet, and fumbling in its depths brought out a creased and somewhat soiled letter. "My duty, sir, as a loyal British subject," he said, presenting it with apparent reluctance to Colonel Schuyler, "compels me to bring this to you, to ask where I should properly take it."

Colonel Schuyler unfolded the sheet. At the very first paragraph his features became set in a sterner mold. Then, something familiar in the handwriting caused his eyes, now cold and severe, to run swiftly down the page, passing over what intervened, to reach the name of him who had written. There he gave a sharp exclamation as of one who had received a painful shock, for bold and clear, at the letter's end, was the well known signature of his friend, Captain Ralph Armstrong. Doubting the authenticity of it, yet suspecting no foul play in the bearer, Philip Schuyler, his composure shattered, returned to the beginning of the letter, and read it through. That done, he dropped the sheet before General Johnson, with a gesture that spoke more eloquently of his feelings than many words. "Read this," he said.

General Johnson, keen judge of his fellows, took it up, scanned it rapidly, sensed its grave import, bent a critical eye upon the signature, and thumped it down in front of Abercrombie. "If Armstrong's writ this, no punishment's bad enough for such a black-hearted villain," he declared, and sat, hand on hip, straight brows drawn into a speculative frown, looking off into space.

General Abercrombie squared his scarlet-clad shoulders while he read, his choler rising higher with each succeeding line of the letter until his complexion vied with his bright coat. "Villain he is," he roared, when he had done, crumpling the paper in his fist, and casting it in a wad upon the table. "A double-dyed villain!"

"'Tis altogether incredible that he be so," objected Schuyler. "Through all the years that I have known him, and they are many, Armstrong has seemed the very soul of honor."

"A hypocrite," denounced Abercrombie imperiously. "We've discovered in him the arch-traitor that's been betraying us to the enemy this long while past. La Force, Du Quayne, and Abiel, perhaps, were but his tools. He shall have his property confiscate for this, and we'll swing him on the gallows if ever we get hands on him."

"His guilt's not yet proved," broke in Johnson, in vigorous protest. "To you, General Abercrombie, he's naught but a stranger, and ye're quick to think the worst of him at the first accusation, but Schuyler here, and myself, are old neighbors to him, old friends as well, and bygones like that are not to be forgot on the instant. Not a bit of it, at all." He settled himself more firmly in his chair, his head thrown high, a masterful

man, determined to have justice done to this accused officer, who was not here to speak in his own behalf.

Jenkins listened to these conflicting views, maintaining his deprecating, passive demeanor, to all appearance the humble instrument, the loyal patriot, who placed his allegiance to his country far above his duty to his master.

Johnson turned on him a searching eye. "Where got you this letter?" he demanded peremptorily.

Shifting from one foot to the other, as though weary of long standing, Jenkins answered promptly, "From a Caughnawaga, sir, whose name I don't know, though he waited for a packet once that Captain Armstrong bade me cast to him as I drove back from Fort William Henry to Albany. I leave you to judge, sir, from this here letter what that packet might have had in it."

"No hard matter that," opined Abercrombie, his heavy lips straightened into a rigid line. "'Tis well that we have you for witness to some of his traitorous doings. Your name, man?"

"Ambrose Jenkins, sir, redemptioner to Captain Armstrong," was the serving-man's ready answer, and then, with the same feigned reluctance to accuse, yet as though anxious that none of the guilty should escape, he added, "There's Coles the farmer, sir. You'll notice that Captain Armstrong points me to him for instructions in some of this spy work."

Johnson interposed shortly. "There'll be no action taken, nor public accusations brought, by your leave, General Abercrombie, till we've sifted this business further. For all we know, this may be French craft, and Armstrong entirely guiltless. There've been such things

done. Here comes a Caughnawaga from Montreal to this man Jenkins, pretending, just to make a tool of him, that he's been sent by his master, but we'll not condemn a man like Armstrong, on the evidence of one letter, that may be but a piece of clever forgery by someone who's got hold of a bit of his writing to imitate."

Masking his vexation and disappointment at this unexpected disbelief, and postponement of judgment upon his master, Jenkins asked, with an assumption of innocent surprise, "Think you then, sir, that this is not master's handwriting?"

"'Tis the very moral of it, so far as looks are concerned," admitted William Johnson, "but we'll wait yet a while, and when we want you, Jenkins, or Coles either, we can send for you to give evidence." Then turning to General Abercrombie, he continued, "Ye're agreed with me on that, General, are ye not?"

"As you say, as you say," granted Abercrombie unwillingly, and so Ambrose Jenkins rode back to his master's farm, not in the full flush of triumph as he had hoped, yet not in actual discouragement. He reflected that it was unlikely that Armstrong had survived the disaster of Sabbath Day, and could return to confute the evidence against him. Unlikely, also, that even if he did, that he could prove that a forgery as cleverly executed as this one was a false document. Feeling secure, therefore, as to the final result, Jenkins was willing to wait a little longer for revenge.

He would have been less confident had he known that close upon his dismissal, Caesar went again to his master, to announce that Hugh Kennedy, of Major

Rogers company of Rangers, was arrived from the north, and asked speech with the Colonel.

Thinking that he was come on some business from Robert Rogers himself, Colonel Schuyler was instantly ready to receive him.

Kennedy found him and his companions seated as Jenkins had left them, the letter which the redemptioner had brought still lying upon the table, and as Hugh approached the threshold, he thought that in the murmur of voices about the table he distinguished the name of Armstrong.

Conversation ceased abruptly on his entrance, and all prepared to give attention to him, since whatever intelligence came to Colonel Schuyler was always shared with these other two.

Philip Schuyler extended a cordial hand to the young ranger. He liked his honest straightforward countenance, and clear unflinching eye. To Johnson he was well known, and from him he got a rousing clap on the shoulder, and a "How are ye, Hugh?" General Abercrombie yielded him a barely perceptible inclination of the head.

Going directly to the heart of his errand, Kennedy said, addressing himself to Colonel Schuyler, "It will please you to hear, sir, that Joscelyn Armstrong, who disappeared at the taking of Fort William Henry, has been found."

Philip Schuyler half started from his chair. "Found!" he exclaimed, "Thank God!" for who could tell better than this daughter of his friend, he instantly asked himself, whether this was her father's writing or no?

The same thought flashed into the mind of William

Johnson. "You've brought your news at the right time, Hugh," declared he roundly. "Where's the lass? Let's have her in at once, if she's here."

"Most opportune, most opportune," murmured Abercrombie, with a flirt of his lace-trimmed handkerchief.

Hugh, certain as he had been that his news would be warmly welcomed, was nevertheless unprepared for the fervor in the tones of the first speakers. "She's not yet here, sirs," he hastened to reply. "She's prisoned in Ticonderoga, in the fort which the French call Carillon. I saw her there, and had speech with her by stealth, ten days since, in the King's Garden, and it has been concerted betwixt us that I'm to return, when the time for escape is most favorable, and bring her home to Albany to her friends."

"And that's right now," affirmed Johnson, "Would God she were here at this minute of time. Her father's honor's at stake, and she could say, it may be, whether the script in yon letter could be his."

Hugh Kennedy looked from one to the other. "How can the Captain's honor be at stake?" he inquired, with some indignation.

Philip Schuyler gave reply. "Read for yourself, Kennedy," pointing to the letter. "Captain Armstrong's redemptioner claims it has been sent him by his master."

Hugh read, his face blackening with anger as he proceeded. "'Tis monstrous," he asserted when he had finished. "I've seen the Captain's writing but once or twice, sirs, but I could swear that he never put pen to this, much as the writing would seem to be his."

"So say I," pronounced General Johnson, "but to satisfy others," with a sidelong glance at Abercrombie,

"it must be proved. If it can't be, it means that his property becomes confiscate to the Crown, and himself brought to the gallows, if ever he comes within British reach."

"A sore disgrace," burst out Kennedy. "I came, General Johnson, by permission of Major Rogers, to Colonel Schuyler, in whose hands Captain Armstrong, as he told me, left certain of his affairs when he was transferred to Fort William Henry. The news of the fall of the fortress has left him in uncertainty as to the fate of the Captain, and that of his wife and daughter. While her parents may perhaps be dead, or, if not that, are captives, Joscelyn Armstrong, though a prisoner, is well, and I hope to rescue her, as I have said. This, that you have told me, would be a bitter disgrace to come upon her, but it shall not,—that it shall not."

"Poor pretty red-cheeked lass, a black disgrace indeed," spoke Johnson. "It shall not be, Hugh, as you say,—not if we can help it, and sure we will. Thank God she's safe, at least. Ye remember her, General Abercrombie, the little dark-haired beauty at the Colonel's dinner at the Flatts last June?"

"Ay," returned Abercrombie, a vivid picture rising before him of Joscelyn in her rose-besprinkled gown, laughing and chatting in company with Catalina Cuyler.

"Jenkins believes that this letter has come to him from Captain Armstrong?" inquired Hugh of Colonel Schuyler.

"So he claims. He brought it to us, as in duty bound, but seeming loth."

Hugh's lip curled scornfully. "I put not too much

confidence in the redemptioner," he murmured in an undertone.

His hearers looked up quickly. "Have you reason to doubt him?" Philip Schuyler asked gravely.

"None, sir," Hugh was forced to admit, "yet I like him not, nor trust him too much, neither."

"'Tis like to be some French trick, Hugh," asserted General Johnson.

"And Jenkins in league with them, it may be," said Hugh, and left it there. "As for Captain Armstrong," he went on earnestly, "there's none more loyal than he, wherever he is, and that I'd stake my life on."

"That would I," vowed William Johnson heartily.

Schuyler turned decisively to Kennedy. "In this ugly matter that we have before us, the maid's presence might be of the utmost help to us in the unravelling of it. I am sure that General Abercrombie will agree with me, that the time to accomplish her escape is now. Can you contrive it?"

"'Twill be much more difficult to do so without risk of prompt discovery and recapture than it would be in winter," responded Hugh, "but I'll do my best, sir, and if I fail the first time, I'll try again."

"Until she comes, we take no steps against her father, I take it?" queried Philip Schuyler courteously of General Abercrombie.

"As you will," drawled General Abercrombie, snapping shut the lid of his jeweled snuff-box, after a generous pinch of the contents.

"No steps at all, at all," William Johnson brought out, as though daring Abercrombie to dissent.

"Gad's my life, Sir William," protested Abercrombie

querulously, throwing him an injured glance, "your tone 'ud make one think I thirsted to see a pretty maid's father strung up, guilty or not guilty, just to pleasure me. Let the man have justice, sir, of course."

"You'll dine with me today, Kennedy," the Colonel invited him cordially. "My wife and niece must have from your own lips what account you can give of Joscelyn Armstrong. They'll ply you with a hundred questions, I'll warrant."

Hugh found it so, yet when at nightfall he was on his way to Ticonderoga, Catalina Cuyler gave many a sigh over questions she might have asked, over messages she might have sent beyond those already given him to deliver for her when he should see Joscelyn again.

CHAPTER XXI



BELIEVING though she did that it would be long before Hugh Kennedy came again, Joscelyn walked often at sunset in the King's Garden, cheered by the knowledge that her father, under the influence of her frequent visits to him, and the restoring efficacy of Manon's excellent soup, was growing stronger day by day.

The satisfaction that this gave her was tempered by the certainty that as soon as he became able to walk, he would be sent to the fort prison, and then she could see him, and speak to him, only as they stood, he within the Place des Armes, the fort enclosure, and she without, a heavy chain separating them, and the presence of the guard preventing free speech.

This parting would probably not come before mid November at the earliest, the surgeon said, because of her father's long lasting weakness from all that he had undergone. It was now the beginning of October, and Joscelyn resolutely shut out from mind and heart the realization of what must come later on, lest it should make her less cheerful before her father.

One day, when no one was close enough to hear her lowered voice, she stooped over his bed, and speaking rapidly in French, as was required of her, she told him of her meeting with Hugh Kennedy in the King's Garden.

"Let him rescue you, if he can," whispered Ralph

Armstrong guardedly, but his decisive accent left her in no doubt of his desire that she should go.

"Nay," replied Joscelyn firmly, "I will never leave you."

"You must. 'Twill give me a happiness that I had not dared hope for, to know that you are free and safe."

"Happiness for me is where you are. I choose that instead of safety and freedom. Do you not wish to have me near you?" She asked it with a reproachful smile.

"To have you near, my sweet, to see and hear you, is brightness in a dark sky, yet I cherish you too dearly to keep you here by cords of filial affection, when you might be restored to our friends, and your old sheltered life." His eyes, deep sunk in their sockets, dwelt upon her with a yearning, unutterable love.

Manon was coming, and there was no opportunity for further private speech. Joscelyn only smiled more sweetly, and said, so that the good woman could catch her words, "To be with you, father, is joy enough for me. See, Manon lets me feed you. Not long ago I had no such happiness."

After this she never came that Ralph Armstrong, opportunity favoring, did not urge her to go with Hugh when he should come. In doing so, he smothered the pang it gave him to think of losing her, and of what life would become without her. He kept what he believed to be her future welfare before him, for many times since Sabbath Day he had bitterly reproached himself for not having insisted upon his wife and child remaining in Albany, in spite of every protestation of theirs. The memory of Elizabeth, the vision of what had in all probability overtaken her, haunted him day and

night. Until Joscelyn had suddenly appeared in company with Sergeant le Boeuf, he had linked her with her mother in his apprehensive thoughts. Now he would do his duty by his daughter, and command her to go back, no matter what it cost him. He could bear his own lot with the greater resignation and fortitude, knowing her secure.

Joscelyn, however, was as fixed in her own determination as he in his, and though she did not argue the matter with her father, she was as resolved as ever that Hugh must depart without her when he came again.

"Mademoiselle has a great love for the sunset," observed Manon, one evening, giving her the desired permission to go the King's Garden.

"Yes, Manon, that I do, and I love best to see it from the garden."

It was in truth beautiful from there, as Manon knew, for if one looked to the north, from the height on which it was placed, one saw through thinning branches and open vista Lake Champlain, stretching away to Crown Point. Far to the west were the Adirondacks, in brilliant Autumn foliage, as was all the world that met Joscelyn's eye. On every side beyond the promontory was lake or river, except where the rapids rushed unrestrained, two miles away, in the small river from Lake George.

When Joscelyn had mounted the steep bit of road which led from the stockade to the higher ground, she paused, and looked thence across the fort enclosure. The grey stone barracks, with their heavy chimneys and peaked dormers, stood out bold and picturesque against the evening sky. In the Place des Armes the sunset gun would presently boom out, and the posting of the night

sentries follow. From the chimney in the mess hall the smoke of freshly laid on fuel was rising, and before another hour regimental mess would be in progress. From every chimney in the stockaded town, also, the smoke was rising thick, for in those humble log huts, too, the supper hour was approaching.

The boisterous laughter of *courreur du bois* came to her distinctly on the clear air. The hills took on rose and purple under the touch of the sinking sun. In spite of frowning cannon, and ditch, and battlements, Joscelyn forgot for a moment that all of this, nevertheless, formed a prison for her father and for her.

When she turned back upon the scene, however, and passed through the gate into the King's Garden, she remembered only Hugh, and that on any day he might come to speak to her at least, though the time that he had planned for her rescue was still far off.

Almost as though she expected to find him waiting for her now, she quickened her footsteps to reach the spot where he had entered in September. So prepared was she for such a possibility, that when she reached it, she gave no start, felt no surprise, when the branches of the arbor vitæ parted cautiously, and she saw Hugh's head, close covered by the helmet of a ranger, appear in the opening.

Joscelyn went swiftly to the opening. That she was glad to see him, he knew from her expressive face, but there was more written there than that, and what its meaning was, he could not conjecture.

"I have come for you, Joscelyn, sooner than I promised," he said, though he made no move to enter.

Her first words made him understand her look. "How

good it was of you to come, Hugh," she answered. "How true a friend you are, but,—but I cannot go."

"You cannot go," repeated Hugh. "What mean you? Is't that you fear the risk? 'Tis great, of course, but I have planned well. You need but do as I bid you. Trust in me, and be brave. Then all will be well."

"Nay, Hugh, 'tis not that I lack courage when there is need. 'Tis because of my father that I say I cannot. He is here, in Ticonderoga,—a prisoner, it is true, but here, where I am."

Her face grew radiant as she told it, as though to be prisoned with one so dear held joy enough for her.

Hugh Kennedy's grey eyes lighted. "Your father! You say that he's here?"

"Yes," she answered. "Now you understand how impossible it would be for me to go. How could I wish it? Do not seek to persuade me. My mind is set to stay."

"'Tis because he is here, and in such sad case that you must go, since he cannot go himself. Listen, and you will wish to go quickly." Then he told her of how her father had been accused.

"Treason! My father accused of treason!" Joscelyn stared aghast at the very words.

"He is accused, and there is seeming proof of it, in a letter supposed to be writ by him. I say supposed, for not for an instant did I credit it to be his, nor do his friends, yet there must be proof that it is not."

"A letter writ by him," stammered Joscelyn mechanically, as though her brain were too stunned to grasp what she had heard.

"The writing seems his to a marvel. Do you not see, Joscelyn, that you must come, as these men wish, and

looking at the letter, swear that it is none of his, and that you know him to be prisoned here."

"Ay, that I will, since 'tis for his honor. That is dearer to him than life, and none shall put stain upon it while I live to prove him innocent. When do we go, Hugh?" She was ablaze now, with anger, and ready to start almost on the instant, as Kennedy had been sure she would be, once she heard him through.

"Two nights hence," he told her. "Major Rogers comes with his rangers to scout around the fort. To escape, you must in some way pass the sentry who guards the stockade gate that gives upon the road. I shall be waiting for you at the edge of this garden nearest to the ditch. Once you reach me there, we shall get safe away."

"Yet how shall I pass the sentry?" murmured Joscelyn in dismay. "And if I did, would he not shout? Would he not rouse the soldiers in the guard-house to follow, and to recapture me?"

"I will tell you. As you know, the man who goes on sentry knows where he will be stationed, and when, twelve hours at least beforehand. There are two difficult things for you to do, but your escape depends upon your accomplishing both. First you must discover which man will guard the stockade gate that night. When you have done that, you must contrive to disable his musket, so as to prevent its going off when he tries to fire it. Then, before he can give an alarm, you can slip through the gate, and have time to reach me."

Joscelyn contemplated him in despair. "How ever could I do that? The sentries must pass inspection at

guard-mount, and if a musket is disabled 'twould be discovered before he goes on duty."

"There are two ways in which it can be done, and not be discovered until he tries to fire," Kennedy informed her. "By loosening the flint, or by plugging the priming-hole. Either will serve."

"'Twill be hard to accomplish, but I must manage it somehow," declared Joscelyn with a spirited lift of her head. "'Tis for my father, and I must succeed."

"You will," answered Kennedy, and the confidence in his tone brought confidence to her.

"Tell me the hour that I must meet you," she said.

"At nine of the clock, for then the officers will still be lingering at mess, and under cover of darkness we can slip away, once you have passed the sentry."

Joscelyn gave a hasty glance over the garden, as she had done many times while they had been speaking, to assure herself that they were not being watched. But the garden was empty. No sentry guarded at this hour, the short road that skirted the bank up which Hugh had climbed to reach her.

She gave Hugh a last brave look, where he stood with the evergreens between them, the twigs thrust aside to show his face.

"God willing," she promised him solemnly, "I shall be at the place at the appointed hour."



CHAPTER XXII



TO BREAK the news to her father that she was about to leave him, was Joscelyn's first and most painful task, and it was rendered the more difficult because she must do it in a foreign tongue. Hugh had given her only two days warning, but since her going was for the sake of her father's honor, the hour could come none too soon.

In the way now grown familiar to him and to her, she came, therefore, and while Manon was busy at her kindly rounds, Joscelyn spoke close to her father's ear, and in most cautious tones.

"Father, if honor impelled me, could you bear to have me leave you?" she asked rapidly, though she knew well what his answer would be.

"I have told you often, dearest child, that when the time came, you must go." He spoke bravely. His eyes were hid from her, and she could not see the pain in their depths, nor know the pang that shot through his breast at the thought of losing her.

"'Tis for you, father. Jenkins has accused you to our friends of being traitor, and shows what he calls proof. I go to confute him." Then she told him in fewest words of the letter and its contents.

It was well that Ralph Armstrong knew how to master himself, or in the heat of his indignation he had betrayed all. Only by the sharp tremor that shook him,

and the iron set of his jaw, did Joscelyn guess what was passing in his soul at such a charge.

"Hugh comes for me tomorrow night. Your friends will take my word when I deny the writing, and the more so when they learn that you are here. 'Twill be proof enough. You know it wrings my heart to leave you, but, father, believe that I shall never rest until you are not only cleared, but set free."

She looked down at him, her faithful heart mirrored in her eyes, and he knew that she was thinking of her mother, also, and longing that she might find her, and restore her to his arms.

When Joscelyn had left him, Ralph Armstrong turned his head until his face was buried from the light in the tattered army coat that pillowed him. His prison was soon to become for him a prison indeed.

Joscelyn, in the inner room of Sergeant le Boeuf's log hut, slept little that night. She heard Raoul climb the ladder to the cock-loft overhead, drop his thick boots upon the floor, and cast himself into his bed of coarse blankets and hemlock twigs. She heard Susette murmuring drowsy contentment when Manon bestowed herself beneath the covers in the broad bed near the kitchen hearth, and drew her little one into her arms to warm her. Through the long night the ceaseless snoring of Sergeant le Boeuf assailed her ears like the rolling of thunder.

While she lay awake, she was revolving in her mind the double problem of how she could discover who was to be sentry at the stockade gate, and how, having learned it, she might achieve that disabling of his fir-

ing-piece upon which her escape, and perhaps her life or Hugh's might depend.

Morning dawned with no solution of either. She dared make no direct inquiries concerning the sentries, for that would have aroused instant suspicion. Her brain began to ache with the number of plans that had sprung into it, and had been rejected as impossibilities.

It was Manon le Boeuf, who, out of her overflowing interest in all her neighbors' affairs, gave her the solution of her first problem, and opened the door of opportunity to accomplish the second.

"It will be gay in the stockade tonight, mademoiselle," she observed genially, as they sat by the hearth, a basket of linen between them. "We go to the hut of Gascoigne Dumont at the stroke of eight to make merry. There will be dancing in the sabots, and music, and good wine, and cakes. You shall go, mademoiselle, of course. Even Susette will be there. Everyone, everyone, from the smallest to the least."

"Not everyone, Manon," denied Joscelyn. "There will be the sentries on duty, who must pace back and forth in the cold. It will not be gay for them."

"That it will not," sympathized Manon. "But when those who go upon sentry at eight return at ten, we shall make it all the merrier for them, because of it, especially for Gascoigne, to whose hut we go."

"He will be away on sentry?" inquired Joscelyn, striving to betray no more than ordinary interest in Manon's chatter.

"At the stockade gate," returned the goodwife. "Near enough, as you see, to be tantalized by the gay sounds." Then she proceeded to enumerate the others who must

serve, and where, but Joscelyn gave scant heed to her now, having learned all that she desired.

Manon did not mean that her attention should wander from this important subject, however. "Gascoigne's hut is to be decked with evergreens. Would not mademoiselle like to go with Raoul, perhaps, to see them put up? Mademoiselle has such taste, such knowledge. Perhaps she might suggest. Marie Dumont is fond of mademoiselle, and would be glad to listen."

Joscelyn agreed eagerly. It offered her one chance in a thousand to come close to the musket of Gascoigne, if, as was his usual custom, he had brought it home from the guard-rack to clean it in preparation for his evening duty.

When Raoul set out, therefore, she accompanied him, and was made welcome, as Manon had prophesied. Gascoigne was there, in the midst of the evergreens, binding up garlands, but Joscelyn, glancing round the hut as she entered, saw no signs of his musket.

For that alone she had come. The morning was half spent, and in the afternoon she must go for the last time to the hospital on the bluff with Manon, to bid her father farewell. To the guard-house she could not go, nor could she dare to approach the gun-rack had it been possible to enter. Perhaps Gascoigne had already put his musket in order, and in that case she would be too late, even if it were here in the hut. Binding a rope of ground pine she grew desperate. She must know. Gascoigne sat near her, and she addressed him.

"This is a pleasant task, Monsieur Dumont," she said politely, "to make your hut gay for the dancing this evening. Far pleasanter it must be for you than

polishing buttons and musket to go upon sentry tonight. Manon has told me how, because of duty, you must be deprived of the first half of the frolic." She paused, not knowing exactly how to draw out what she wished to know.

"*Sacré!*" exclaimed Gascoigne Dumont, letting fall his garland as though it had suddenly bitten him. "My buttons, mademoiselle! I had forgotten them with a completeness. This is what happens when one's mind is on the dance. But worst of all my musket! How is it possible? I must attend to it on the instant. Mademoiselle has my gratitude. Had she not by the merest of accidents mentioned these, I should without doubt have spent the night in the guard-house in punishment."

Joscelyn bent her head low over her work to hide her tell-tale face. His musket was here, then, after all. He would bring it within reach of her hand, perhaps. She had been signally prospered thus far. Would she be prospered still further? This she asked herself, with a throbbing heart, while Gascoigne advanced into the adjoining room to fetch his coat and musket, while Marie Dumont and several of her neighbors gossiped and gave opinion, and laid plans for the evening, while Raoul came in and out with bundles of evergreen, and bright leaves and vines, with which the walls of the hut were to be lined, transforming it into a veritable bower.

Waiting, Joscelyn snatched up a bit of soft pine wood from the hearth, for she clearly remembered in what manner Susette had once plugged her father's musket, could see in her mind's eye the pledgett of wood, its size and shape, could hear, also, Sergeant

le Boeuf's angry words as he had pried it out: "Had it been necessary to fire my musket, it would have been a thing impossible."

With the knife which Gascoigne had left behind upon the bench, she shaped the bit of soft wood rapidly, her back to the others, her hands concealed under the ground-pine, and when he returned with his musket, and pushing aside the evergreens sufficiently, seated himself upon the bench before the fire to clean it, she was ready.

Attacking his buttons first, and vigorously, he brought them to a dazzling brightness, and hung away the coat. Then he took up the musket. He cleaned it, oiled the stock, and polished the barrel, humming an old French ballad the while. Joscelyn watched him closely from behind the drooping veil of her black locks, fearful lest the moment should pass that might allow her to carry out her scheme. Hidden from view, where she could instantly seize it lay her pledgett of wood.

But not for an instant did Gascoigne put down his firing-piece. Between his knees, or across them, he kept it, and Joscelyn wondered how she was ever to get hold of it, or to reach the priming-hole unseen. On one excuse or another she tried to divert his attention, to cause him to lay it down, but always he retained firm hold of it with his left hand, while he gave her what aid she asked of him with the right.

Nevertheless, fortune for the third time that morning favored her, just before Gascoigne put the finishing touches to his weapon.

"Come hither, for one small instant, Gascoigne," called Marie, perched on a chair before the carved cor-

ner cupboard. It was the apple of her eye. Gascoigne himself had carved it for her with rude figures of birds and beasts, and flowers, as a gift to her last Noël. It must be especially bedecked. But Marie was short, and could not reach its top. "Thou art so tall, my husband, come, place for me this garland."

Good-naturedly Gascoigne responded, leaning his musket, muzzle upward, against the bench, while he went to arrange the garland to his wife's liking, and all looked on admiringly.

All but Joscelyn. With the speed of lightning, she grasped her pledgett, with the speed of lightning she leant over the musket, and drove it deep into the priming-hole, and broke off the wood flush with the metal.

Gascoigne returned to his seat, put a new flint in the hammer, regarded his finished work critically, and suspecting nothing amiss, placed the musket for the time being in the rack above the chimney-piece.

At a quarter before the appointed hour that evening, Joscelyn stole away unseen from the jolly company in the crowded hut of the Dumonts. As she came out into the faint starlight, she saw the twinkling lights of the west barracks, and heard music and song floating uproariously into the night from the mess hall there, where the officers were banqueting.

She had bade good-bye to her father in the late afternoon, with a clinging tenderness, and a choking in her slender young throat at his whispered words of blessing and prayer for her safe journeying. Forbidden though it was, their last words were in their own tongue, spoken too low for any to hear.

"God keep you, father," she had whispered brokenly.

"God keep my lass," he had answered from between quivering lips, believing that he looked his last upon her in this world.

Now she must leave farewell for Manon, kind Manon, who had sheltered, and loved, and comforted her. Entering the hut, she slipped a scrap of paper, containing her written message, under the good woman's pillow, kissed the pillow itself, and without one look behind her, for time pressed, was gone.

"Take care of my dear father, Manon," she had pleaded in her affectionate note of parting, "I go to prove his innocence of a foul charge placed against him."

Out into the dark stockade she went, wrapped in her dark camlet cloak, and keeping in the dense blackness of the shadows, soon reached the gate where Gascoigne stood on guard. His back was turned to her. He faced the road, and the short steep slope up the bank which she must mount before she could reach the garden and Hugh.

She breathed quicker, her heart pounding like a hammer beneath her coarse woolen cloak. It seemed as though Gascoigne must hear it, and guess her presence, even though he might not see her in the dark.

Closer she crept, and closer yet, along the dense wall of the stockade. Scarce a yard separated her now from the gate, and the dash she must make for liberty. Should she be able to make it, with her limbs trembling under her, as they were? Could she win through? She asked it with a fainting spirit. She *must* win through. Her father's good name depended upon her so doing.

Gascoigne turned slowly upon his heels, and for a

moment cast an envious glance toward his hut, where all was brightness, and noise, and merriment, more pleasing to him, infinitely, than this dark solitude, and the chill of the October night.

In that instant, gathering up every ounce of strength, with a silent cry from her inmost soul for help, Joscelyn sped through the gate, across the ditch, and up the slope.

Silent she had been, and fleet as a deer, but Gascoigne sensed that someone had passed. "*Qui vive?*" he demanded sharply, whirling toward the gate, and again, "*Qui vive?*" when no answer came.

Lost in the shadows, Joscelyn sped for life. She heard Gascoigne cock his musket, knew that he assayed to fire. Climbing the dark bank in frantic haste, she heard his loud "*Sacre,*" as though he berated his clumsiness, and then his smothered oath as he discovered that his piece was useless.

He called lustily for help, for he was sure now that he had glimpsed a fleeting figure as he turned, but the noise of the revelers drowned his shouts, and none came forth to answer his summons.

On ran Joscelyn, and reached the hedge by the King's Garden, spent, breathless, and stumbling, her pulses roaring at her ear-drums like the sound of waves upon a beach.

She would have fallen, had not a strong arm shot out, lifting her upright, and Kennedy's voice spurred her to fresh effort.

"Courage, Joscelyn. A little longer. This way."

The shouts of Gascoigne still terrifying her with the menace of possible pursuit, she obeyed Kennedy, following blindly where he led her, into the King's Gar-



She would have fallen had not a strong arm shot out



den, keeping well against the inner border of the hedge, whose branches gave out a rich fragrance as they pressed by. Now they were pushing through the hedge by main force, now they were scrambling down the farther bank, now they were hasting, velvet-footed, along trails familiar to the ranger, where they would be safe from sentries.

Through the obscurity of the forest he guided her unfalteringly, and it was close upon midnight when they arrived at that spot on the eastern shore of Lake George where Kennedy had left a canoe hidden under leaves and branches, a few yards back from the shore.

Little more than six weeks ago Joscelyn had traversed this lake as the captive of Hooting Owl, going she knew not whither. Now she was to pass over it in freedom, guarded by one who, as she well knew, would give his last drop of blood to ensure her safe conduct to her home and friends.

They had gone some distance up the lake, keeping well in the protecting shadows, before Joscelyn broke the silence between them.

"You have been wondrous kind to me, Hugh," she said, almost timidly.

"Make naught of it, Joscelyn," answered Kennedy, and bent more sturdily to his paddle-stroke.

Many times she had known homesickness since she had left Albany. Now she was returning, but with what different hopes and longings under what changed circumstances. Squeaking and complaining, the heavy wagon-wheels brought her to the door of the Schuyler town mansion. Her eyes blurred, and there was a catch at her throat at the thought that when last she had come to these beloved friends it had been on pillion behind her mother.

A carriage dashed in to the horse-block ahead of the slower moving wagon, and a young girl, tossing the carriage robe from her knees, stepped out. In the half light Joscelyn saw that it was Catalina Cuyler. The carriage, with its remaining freight of care-free young people, rolled away, Catalina waving gay good-byes, as she ascended the house-steps.

Joscelyn found voice. "Catalina, Catalina!" she called tremulously.

A swift turn of the pretty head, a scream of "Joscelyn, my sweet Joscelyn!" and Catalina was down the steps in a trice, to seize her friend in welcoming arms, as Hugh Kennedy lifted the way-worn girl almost bodily from the wagon. Uttering soft croonings of love and joy, she pressed her to her breast, and Joscelyn, speechless and half fainting from weariness, held fast to her.

"'Twas a long hard journey for her," interposed Hugh presently. "Best get her in quickly to Madame Schuyler, I think."

Supporting her between themselves, for Joscelyn's knees bent under her, they led her into the spacious

house, and to where Madame Schuyler sat in her great arm-chair before the hearth reading.

The handsome furnishings, the chimney-piece set with tiles, upon which scenes from Scripture were painted, the massive candle-sticks bearing tall wax tapers, that, shedding clear light upon Madame's book, made a mellow glow in the room, upon the paintings on the walls, upon Madame herself, richly dressed in velvet and lace, formed a picture of comfort, serenity, and cultured ease far removed and sharply at variance from the rude scenes, the sorrows, and the dangers through which Joscelyn had been passing.

At the sound of three pairs of feet, where she had expected but one, Madame Schuyler raised her eyes from her book, and perceived who companioned Catalina.

Seldom did Madame Schuyler lose her composure, and rarely in these years since she was grown heavy and unwieldy did she rise from her chair to receive anyone, however eminent, but at sight of Joscelyn, forlorn, and as she believed, motherless, she struggled to her feet, difficult though it was for her, her pitying eyes, her every feature betraying the depth to which she was stirred. In silence she opened her arms wide, and with a sob Joscelyn went into them.

In the interval in which that nobly gracious head was bowed above Joscelyn, something passed from Margaretta Schuyler's soul to hers which had no need for speech in order to make itself felt. Balm of consolation, sympathy, sincere affection, approving trust, flowed out to her, and enveloped her, as she rested

within the circle of these reassuring arms in which she found haven.

A long moment Madame Schuyler held her thus, and then lifted the girl's drooped head and kissed her. Turning to her niece she gave instructions. "Have Dianamat make her comfortable in the best bedchamber, Catalina. There must be a good fire, the sheets must be warmed, and her supper brought to her. In the morning she will be ready for whatever comes, but tonight she must have rest before else."

"Aunt," begged Catalina, with falling face, "may she not stay with me in my own room? I had so hoped she might. We have not seen one another in so long."

But Madame Schuyler was obdurate. "No chatter tonight, Catalina. Take her to Diana, as I bade you, and stay with her not longer than five minutes at the utmost."

The wisdom of Madame Schuyler's commands was amply shown, for when Joscelyn, under the ministrations of old Diana, was fed, prepared for the night, and made snug between fine sheets, from which all chill had been removed by the long-handled copper warming-pan filled with live coals, she sank immediately into a sleep so profound and peaceful that the sun was shining broad into her windows when she awakened.

Catalina, fully dressed, was tapping at the door, for everyone rose early in the Schuyler household, and plied her with innumerable questions while she made her toilet, but they spoke most of the matter which filled all Joscelyn's thoughts.

"Uncle Schuyler sent off a messenger for Jenkins last night, as soon as he learned that you were come,"

Catalina informed her, "and at ten of the clock this morning he will be brought to my uncle's office, and there, in the presence of Sir William Johnson, and General Abercrombie, and Uncle, you are to be shown this letter. They are convinced that 'twill take but a word from yourself ——"

"To prove it false," finished Joscelyn quickly.

Morning prayers, never omitted in the Schuyler family, the cheerful breakfast hour, the talk with Madame Schuyler and the Colonel that followed, and Catalina never stirring from her side, helped Joscelyn to pass the period of waiting, impatient though she was to have the hour strike.

When at last Catalina left her at the office-door, she went in with lifted brow, and a confident spirit.

She slipped sedately into the chair waiting for her beside Colonel Schuyler. Sir William Johnson, by his warm hand-clasp, gave her to know that his faith in her father was unimpaired. General Abercrombie, stiff and punctilious, had greeted her with a ceremonial bow.

Ambrose Jenkins, unprepared for her presence, had stooped quickly at her entrance, with a pretence of pulling up his hose, that by so doing he might conceal the perturbation which he felt, and which he feared might be visible in his face. That she should be brought here perhaps to confute him had not entered into his calculations. When he drew himself upright again, however, he was to perfection the respectful servitor, called upon to perform most unwillingly a painful duty.

At Colonel Schuyler's right hand lay the letter. He opened it, and laid it before Joscelyn. "Can you tell us,

my dear," he queried, "whether or no your father has writ this?"

The burning eyes of Jenkins were upon the girl as she took it up. Except for the intensity of his gaze, his face was well-masked, but every muscle in his body was taut with anxiety as to the result of her inspection.

Prepared for immediate rejection of it as her father's letter, expecting to find such radical and intrinsic differences as would make her verdict easy, Joscelyn looked down upon the page, started involuntarily, looked closer, and as she looked puzzlement, and undisguised wonder struggled together in her face.

Jenkins, his furtive surveillance never wandering from her, and knowing himself unwatched, gave a covert smile of relief behind his hand.

The rest, casting troubled glances the one at the other, waited uneasily for her word.

But Joscelyn stared as one bewildered at the paper in her hand, while the silence grew.

"Speak lass," burst out Sir William Johnson, unable longer to bear the suspense. "What think you of it?"

The page fluttered from her limp fingers as she answered helplessly, "Of this letter I know not what to think, but that it is not my father's, I am sure."

"From your behavior, I take it that the writing is very like to his," observed the judicial Abercrombie.

"Like to it, stroke for stroke," Joscelyn admitted reluctantly, "and yet,—and yet I know it is not his. It cannot be."

"Many strange things can be," replied her questioner tritely. "It is proof, and not conjecture that we seek. Answer me this: provided that this letter contained

nothing treasonable, that it had in it only such words as you might expect from your father, should you then take it to be from him?"

"Ay," breathed Joscelyn very low.

"Then why not this?" he demanded.

Her answer came fast. "Because knowing him, who is the very soul of honor, and one who loves his country better than his life, I know he could not write thus. Besides, my father lies sick, and a prisoner at Ticonderoga, as I have already made known to Colonel Schuyler."

For the second time that morning Ambrose Jenkins felt that it would be harder than he had supposed to fasten guilt upon his master. Captain Armstrong was living, after all. The fact that he was at Ticonderoga, and in such case as his daughter represented would tell heavily in favor of him in the minds of at least two of the three men. Nevertheless, there were arguments that he could still bring to bear against him.

"Sirs," he interposed, as though loth to speak, yet driven to it by conscience, "has not this young miss said herself, that stroke by stroke the writing is Captain Armstrong's own?"

"I said not that it was his, but that 'twas like to his," Joscelyn rebuked him.

"Your pardon, miss," bowed Jenkins, as though ashamed. "I mistook your meaning."

Turning abruptly away from him, Joscelyn addressed the group assembled about the table. "Can you not see," she continued, "that if my father were in the service of the French, he would not be a prisoner? Can you

not see," she insisted, "that this letter must be a forgery?"

"You deem it such, then, Joscelyn?" broke in Colonel Schuyler, before General Abercrombie could speak.

"That, and naught else," she declared stoutly. "I would take the sacred oath upon it."

"Since this is what you think, you have told us all you can, and it may be that General Abercrombie will excuse your further presence here this morning."

"She may go, of course, if there is nothing important to be gained from her," grunted Abercrombie.

"Keep up a brave heart, lass," counseled William Johnson, conducting her to the door. "It'll all come right, never fear."

Joscelyn threw him a grateful look from under her curving brows. "It comforts me to hear you say it, General Johnson," she murmured. Then, with a sudden impulse, she paused upon the threshold, to ask, "Gentlemen, had General Montcalm been here this morning, and had given you his word of honor that my father is not in traitorous service to the French, would that have been sufficient to establish his innocence?" She asked it of them all, but her eyes rested upon Abercrombie, for she knew that the final judgment must come from him.

It was he who answered. "General Montcalm is a man of unblemished honor. I would have accepted his word."

She pressed her point. "Even in the face of this letter?"

"So far as your father is concerned, yes. The letter itself would call for investigation, however, for it is

plain that by means of it someone seeks to obtain information of military value."

Joscelyn passed out, and when the door had closed upon her, William Johnson leaned to Abercrombie, and repeated the girl's question, "If Armstrong be ill at Ticonderoga, how could this letter be from him?"

Colonel Schuyler's fixed gaze asked of him the same.

Abercrombie fidgetted in his chair. "'Tis a vexatious question," he sputtered. "Either he is not at Ticonderoga, and the girl lies to shield him, as womenfolk have done ere now for those they love, or this letter is forgery. You can answer as well as I, as to which ground we must take."

"Begging your pardons, sirs," ventured Jenkins, as though asking for information merely, "could master, at Ticonderoga, use this means to buy himself free?"

"Certainly, certainly," snapped Abercrombie, resenting this serving-man's persistence. "That will do now, Jenkins. You may go, but see that you remain in Albany, to be called on, if I wish it."

"One moment, General," said Sir William. "The Indian that brought this message? Who, and where is he? It might be well to have him up before us."

Abercrombie threw Jenkins a glance of inquiry. "You should know," he told him.

"I'd be glad if I could say, sir," the redemptioner returned regretfully, "but 'twas dark as a pocket when he came at me from a pine thicket, and stuffed the letter into my hand. He was off again before I saw his face, and I'm sure he meant I should not, sir. A Caught-

nawaga, I should think, but that's as much as I could say."

"That will do then, that will do," General Abercrombie waved him to the door, impatiently, and thus urged, Jenkins took his departure.

He had learned by this time that the sympathies of all but Abercrombie, were strongly enlisted for his master, and his master's daughter. Now that she was here to plead her father's cause, he must think of some means by which he could discredit her. If he could do that, he might be able to convince these men, every one, of the guilt of Captain Armstrong.

The striking of the town clock broke in upon his reflections, reminding him that the dinner hour for the Dutch folk of Albany was at hand. To take his noon-day meal at the house of Mynheer Lyddius would mean abundance of good fare, without cost to himself, for Anneke, with whom he was, by now, on considerably more than friendly terms, would see to his comfort. He bent his footsteps in that direction, therefore, leaving his vexed questions until after his inner man should be refreshed.



CHAPTER XXIV



MAY, Joscelyn dearest, do not stay and mope at home," begged Catalina, her cheek pressed to her friend's. "Come with me to my company. You'll be made welcome, that you know."

"Do not tease me, sweet," said Joscelyn, kissing her. "My heart is heavy, thinking of my father, and what to do for him. Leave me here, and I shall be content."

"Leave you this once I must, since you will not go," returned Catalina ruefully, "for I am pledged to be at Rebecca Marten's house within the hour. Aunt will be busy in her closet all afternoon. Uncle is away from home. If I am gone, it leaves you quite alone. Sorry I am, dearest, as you must know."

"You need not be. Now let me see you in that pretty hood, dear. Its blue should make your eyes the bluer." Joscelyn took up the richly quilted silken headgear, adjusted it upon Catalina's blond head, and tied its azure tinted strings beneath the rounded chin. "There," she said, looking lovingly into the eyes she praised, "I knew how 'twould be. They are the color of the sky."

Catalina gave her a gentle shake. "Flatterer," she laughed, ran to throw on her cloak, and presently was gone.

Joscelyn sank into a chair. Solitude, that gave her opportunity to meditate undisturbed, was welcome in

her distraught state. That morning hour in Colonel Schuyler's office had slain her confidence in speedy exoneration of her father. If only General Montcalm were here, and could speak for him! General Abercrombie had said that his word would be enough. If only he were here!

All at once her eyes brightened, and dejection vanished from her face, for inspiration had come to her. "Why," she asked herself, "should I not write to him, and beg him to send a letter to General Abercrombie, restoring my father's good name, and denying that he serves the French."

A writing-portfolio lay upon the table. She decided to write immediately. She went to it, seated herself, seized paper and ink, and driving the grey goose quill rapidly, she poured out her request from her full heart as to an understanding friend, as well as to a great and noble general.

It did not occur to her to consult with anyone as to whether or not she should do this, for she felt that both love and duty required it of her. Nor did she mean to speak of it until Montcalm's answer should come, unless some unforeseen circumstance should make it necessary. For this last, she had no reason beyond a certain instinct which she could not define. That there was anything in what she was about to do which might be considered harmful, or that was in the least forbidden, would never have occurred to her, since she had had no experience that could have warned her to seek advice before she acted. Her one thought was to write instantly, send her letter as quickly as possible, so that there might

be no delay that she could have prevented in the receipt of General Montcalm's reply.

Having finished her letter, therefore, she sealed it, threw on her cloak, and pulled its hood well over her head. She knew that winter and summer alike Indians from Canada came down to trade in furs with Philip Lyddius, and she was sure that he could obtain for her a messenger. Never having heard that he was under suspicion of wrong-doing she went toward his house without compunction, or fear.

Ambrose Jenkins, lolling at his ease, and smoking a pipe with Lyddius in the cosy warmth of the trader's fireside, saw Joscelyn as she approached the front door, and sat erect. In a lightning flash he guessed why she was here, for he recalled her question that morning concerning Montcalm. In her innocence she had come to play unwittingly into his hands. Tapping the ashes from his pipe, he looked at the trader. "My good friend, Lyddius," he said, "if the girl who is about to knock at your door asks you to send a message for her to Montcalm, or to any of the French, refuse her. I know the circumstances, and have every reason to be certain that you will be betrayed if you grant what she asks. Refuse her."

The Dutchman laughed. "Is it likely that I would risk for a girl my neck? Girls and womens it is not to trust. Too much the tongue wags. I make nothing with them."

Jenkins got to his feet, and went toward the kitchen and Anneke. "Hold fast to that, Mynheer Lyddius," he said as he disappeared.

He closed the kitchen door at the first sound of the knocker, and coming close to Anneke, encircled her waist with his arm. Else was busy in her room overhead, and he was free to speak and act unobserved.

"Hark you, Anneke," he whispered, his right hand under her chin. "Filch me the locket from the neck of the girl who has just knocked. I have need of it. Wilt do this for me?"

Anneke nodded obediently. The impudent sureness of the redemptioner's advances when they had first met had at that time annoyed her, but eventually had attracted her, and now she was willing to grant him any favor that he might ask of her. It was her duty to answer the door. She slipped away from Jenkins, and went to open it.

Ambrose Jenkins, a sardonic smile on his face, watched her go. If she was skilful, and succeeded in obtaining what he wished, he felt confident of speedy success in his cherished purposes, for he knew how he could use the locket to discredit any testimony that Joscelyn had given or might give, that would be of aid in clearing her father.

Not until Joscelyn's hand was lifted a second time to the knocker, did the door suddenly swing open, and Anneke, her rosy face radiating friendliness, invite her to enter.

"I would speak with Mynheer Philip Lyddius," began Joscelyn, and then, seeing the portly figure, still seated by the hearth, she went to him at once, her letter in her open palm.

"Mynheer Lyddius, he is here," said the trader, and

without doing her the courtesy of rising, he motioned her to a chair.

"One moment, mees," interposed Anneke officiously. "If in your cloak you sit, you will it not feel when back into the cold you go." Helping Joscelyn to remove it, she hung it over the back of the settle near the hearth. "It will now be, oh, so warm for you, when you are home going."

She withdrew, and left the visitor with her father, and Joscelyn made her request, nothing doubting that it would be granted, if she paid him for his good offices.

But Lyddius instantly shook his head, and pursed his lips in virtuous denial. "No, no, my mees, that I cannot do. With my country's enemies I nothing make."

"There is no harm in this," exclaimed Joscelyn in surprise. "'Tis merely a letter asking General Montcalm to clear my father of a false accusation. You may read the letter, if you wish, to assure yourself that no harm can possibly come of it." Her fingers were upon the seal ready to break it, but Lyddius checked her.

"If on that paper, mees, there was not so mooch as one leetle word," he affirmed, rolling up his fishy eyes solemnly, "with it I would nothing make, if it must to the enemy general be sent. Is it that you do not know that for that punishment by the law is? I would not such a risks run." He waved her off with both palms as though contamination were in herself and her letter.

"Surely there could be no punishment for this," protested Joscelyn, still holding it out to him. "Its every word shows that there is no wrong in it."

"No, no," asserted Lyddius emphatically in obstinate refusal, "the law is the law. Against it I never go."

To her every pleading, to her offers to pay both him and the messenger well, he responded by flying into righteous indignation. "Dese womens what they are? A bribe she would offer me! A bribe she would offer me the law to break!" he ejaculated in well-simulated horror. "For that never should you come to Philip Lyddius."

In despair Joscelyn turned to put on her cloak. At this, Anneke, who had left the kitchen door conveniently ajar in order to accommodate her round eye to the crack, came bustling in, and reaching the settle before her, took up the well-warmed cloak, and threw it about Joscelyn. On pretence of difficulties in adjusting the weight of the heavy cloak about her shoulders, and of fastening the clasps securely about her throat, the crafty Dutch girl, with astonishing cleverness managed to remove the locket from Joscelyn's neck, and secrete it in her own bosom.

Too sorely cast down by the dashing of her hopes, too occupied with the problem of finding transmission of her message by other means, to give heed to Anneke's movements, Joscelyn left the house in ignorance of her loss.

She had not been turned from her purpose ever so slightly by what Lyddius had said concerning the law. Her conscience absolved her as to the contents of the letter, her father's need justified her act, and if punishment must come upon her when what she did became known, she would be willing to meet it. Moreover, when Montcalm's answer came, it would demonstrate how innocent her communicating with him had been, and she must infallibly be forgiven, in common justice.

Thus, while Anneke gave over the gold locket to Jenkins in the privacy of the kitchen, tenanted only by themselves, Joscelyn walked slowly along the Market Street, pondering where next she should turn.

A call in a familiar voice roused her from her anxious thoughts. Raising her head, she saw Bright Waters hurrying toward her as fast as the stiff blanket which enveloped her would permit. "Oniata, Oniata!" she cried, "Bright Waters is glad that her pale-face sister has come back to her own people."

Joscelyn grasped the welcoming hands extended to hers, and looking into the eyes of the Indian girl saw in their depths faithful love, and joy. "Had it not been for you, Bright Waters," she made haste to say, "and because Hooting Owl kept his promise to you, your Oniata might never have done so. 'Tis to you that I owe it." The kiss she gave the Mohawk maid bore witness to the sincerity of her words.

"Oniata is my friend," the Indian girl responded simply. "Whatever Bright Waters can do for her, shall always be done."

Joscelyn sighed. If only what she needed now were within Bright Waters' power to compass.

The affectionate eyes of the daughter of the Mohawks searched her face. "Oniata is troubled," she said. "Will she not tell her friend what it is that lies like a black shadow upon her spirit?"

The tender sympathy of her accents opened the flood-gates of Joscelyn's heart, and without further persuasion she poured out the story of her difficulties.

"Let not Oniata seek longer for a messenger," Bright

Waters said, when she had finished. "If she will give her letter to me, it shall be carried quickly, and straight as the crow flies, to the great French general in Montreal."

"Who would take it?" asked Joscelyn, her burden lifted suddenly.

"A Caughnawaga."

"He will go soon?"

"Before the setting of today's sun."

Joscelyn knew that for a Caughnawaga, and she believed that for Bright Waters also, there could be no danger of punishment for transmitting her message. While the Mohawks, under the influence of Sir William Johnson, were allies to the British Crown, they were not under its rule, nor subject to its laws. As for the Caughnawagas, the same held good, and they came and went freely from their adopted home near Montreal to kindred Caughnawagas in the Mohawk Valley, and as allies merely to the French, owed allegiance to no laws of either nation. Without hesitation, therefore, she gave her letter into the Indian girl's keeping.

"Tell me, Bright Waters," she said, when this was done, "how is it that you are in Albany now? You are not wont to be here after summer is gone."

"Bright Waters came to ask Warraghiaghy for justice for a daughter of her people, and for food for her and her little ones, who hunger in their lodge in the Mohawk. Warraghiaghy is just. He is the friend of the Five Nations. He has not refused his help."

Joscelyn knew that she spoke of Sir William Johnson, and that Warraghiaghy was the name that the

Indians gave him because of his office as sole Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the British Crown. "You have seen him, then?" she asked.

"Bright Waters has seen him, and he has promised. It is enough. She goes back, now, to her home in the Mohawk."

"If it had not been for your errand, I could not have found a messenger in my hour of need, nor could I have thanked you, for long, because of all you have done for me."

"It is well, then, that Bright Waters came, if she has been able to help her friend." She said good-bye, and Joscelyn watched her blanketed figure, slim and straight as an arrow, pass swiftly out of sight.

True it was, as Joscelyn believed, that English laws could not touch this daughter of the Mohawks to punish her, yet she felt sure that if it should become known that Bright Waters had obtained Hooting Owl to carry a message to Montreal, and there was little doubt that it would be to him whom she would entrust it, that she might fall under the suspicion of the English, and of Sir William Johnson himself, since the Caughnawagas who came down from Canada, Hooting Owl among them, were believed to combine spying with their trading. For this reason, she determined that Bright Waters' name should not become known in connection with what she had done for her.

It was indeed Hooting Owl to whom Bright Waters gave the letter, and charged him solemnly to make speed in going, and in returning.

Before she had given her promise to marry Red Fox, a Mohawk chieftain, who had been killed by a French

bullet at the battle of Lake George, little more than two years ago, she had known that Hooting Owl loved her. Many times since the death of Red Fox he had begged her to become his squaw, and go with him to Montreal. But Bright Waters would not listen. She loved her home and people in the beautiful valley of the Mohawk. Her heart beat warm with friendship for Warraghiaghy and Colonel and Madame Schuyler. To them she was bound by ties of gratitude, affection, and respect. Therefore, though summer and winter, autumn and spring, Hooting Owl sought to bring her to a change of mind, and though her instincts turned with greater strength to him than they had to the haughty and suspicious Red Fox, who in his short courtship of her had promised to be a harsh and exacting spouse, the Caughnawaga had thus far pleaded in vain.

Today, taking Joscelyn's letter from her, where they stood sheltered from view of foot-passengers by a bastion of Fort Frederick, Hooting Owl said mournfully, "Bright Waters asks much of Hooting Owl, but gives nothing. Will this always be so for him?"

The Indian girl glanced up at him with a toss of the eagle's feather in her hair, and with more than ordinary kindness in her brilliant eyes. "When Hooting Owl is ready to come again to live in the Mohawk, and to become the friend of Warraghiaghy, it may not always be so."

Hooting Owl, his countenance brightening, made a lover-like movement toward her.

Swiftly Bright Waters drew back. "Let not Hooting Owl touch the daughter of the Eagle till she gives him leave," she rebuked him haughtily.

"The son of the Turtle asks Bright Waters to forgive him," said Hooting Owl humbly. "He will wait,—he will wait long."

"If he will do as Bright Waters desires him, he need not wait long," was her reply, but before he could say more, she was gone.

That evening, while Joscelyn, in the light and warmth of the Schuyler drawing-room, took turns with Catalina in reading aloud to Aunt Schuyler, while the Colonel sat over a game of chess with his nephew Philip, two men dashed through the night on conflicting errands, and in opposite directions.

The redemptioner, on a sturdy nag, of enduring qualities, which he had carefully selected, and surreptitiously borrowed from an inn stable, galloped away along the Schenectady road. At midnight he hitched his horse in his master's stable-yard, lifted the latch of the kitchen door, and having made sure by the loud snoring of Coles and his wife that they were sleeping soundly, he crept from shadow to shadow to the chimney-cupboard, and purloined thence a letter sent by Joscelyn from Fort William Henry to Mistress Coles in June. Three hours later the nag stood again in his stall, and in a mean room, assigned to him in a dwelling of the poorer sort in Albany, as the only place where a redemptioner could be harbored, Ambrose Jenkins sat by his tallow-dip, writing in a girlish hand, on paper of tissue thinness, a letter to General Montcalm.

As tireless as he, and not less eager to reach his separate goal, Hooting Owl sped through the darkness, as straight as the crow flies, toward Montreal. Securely

buried in the depths of his tobacco pouch, which hung always at his side, was Joscelyn's letter, that letter to her generous friend, Louis Joseph de Montcalm, upon which, in this crisis of her father's life and hers, all her hopes were set.

CHAPTER XXV



IN THE light of early morning, while the Dutch house-vrouws were busily preparing family breakfasts, a cloaked and hooded figure stood before Philip Lyddius' door. It was Joscelyn Armstrong.

Not until bedtime of the night before had she discovered that her locket was missing. Ever since she had left Fort William Henry, it had been her custom to conceal it beneath her dress, and because of that neither she nor Catalina had noticed that it was gone. Joscelyn's heart had leapt to her throat at the discovery, but not for an instant did she suspect that she had been robbed by the deft-fingered Dutch girl.

Sure that it must be somewhere near about, she shook out her clothing, and searched the floor of her bedroom, but in vain. She would have gone immediately through the house to make a more thorough search, but the family had retired to rest by the time she missed it, the lights were extinguished, and Catalina, after an afternoon of youthful jollity, and a quiet evening by the hearth, was already fast asleep in her own nook on the floor above. Joscelyn was obliged, therefore, to wait until morning.

At the first peep of day she rose, and before even the servants were stirring, she went carefully over the halls and over every room which she had entered on the preceding day.

This being fruitless, she wondered if she could have

dropped it from her neck at the house of Philip Lyddius, or perhaps on the way thither. Muffling herself, to escape recognition by curious foot-passengers, she hastened to the trader's door, anxiously scanning the muddy street as she went.

Anneke presented an astonished countenance at the squat door, when Joscelyn knocked.

"Oh, no, my mees," she replied to Joscelyn's inquiry. "Here it did not lose itself. At once would it have been seen by me." Even so, she made a great pretence of hunting about the floor of the best room. "For yourself you can see that it nowhere is," was her final announcement. "The catch must not so strong have been, and on the street, perhaps, it has fallen. On your neck yesterday, I did not see it."

Departing in the midst of a torrent of regrets, Joscelyn retraced her steps, still scrutinizing every inch of the way.

The streets being practically empty at this hour, she had thought herself unnoticed in both her coming and going, but from two separate windows she had been observed, and recognized.

Ambrose Jenkins, in the stuffy little chamber of the house where he had lodgment, espied her from the peaked dormer, which gave him a slanting view of the trader's house, and seeing, he congratulated himself that the girl had thrown into his hands a second piece of evidence to use against her.

From the inn-parlor, Hugh Kennedy, warming himself before the freshly kindled fire, was surprised by the sight of a familiar form passing the window at such an hour. Stepping briskly to the pane, he saw Joscelyn

go to the door of the trader, and receive admission. His astonishment at her going to such a place, and at such a time, was extreme. Puzzled by it, and unable to imagine the cause, he remained chained to the window until she emerged into the street. Then clapping on his ranger's cap, he hastened after her.

He overtook her at the corner of the street, and almost before he had given her a morning greeting, he blurted out, "Why did you go to the house of Lyddius, just now? Can you not guess how ill it will look for you, Joscelyn, in the eyes of those who have your father's interest at heart? This man is himself suspected, and has been for a long time, of having disloyal dealings with the French, although as yet he has not been caught at it."

Joscelyn was startled. She flushed to the roots of her hair, but she answered frankly, for she could not let Hugh think ill of her. "I knew naught of that, but only that Indians come from Canada to him to trade. For that reason, I went to him yesterday, to ask him to find one who would carry a letter for me to General Montcalm."

Kennedy looked at her in astonishment, but before he could speak, she went on. "He cannot be disloyal, for he refused instantly, and said that it was a punishable offence against one's country to communicate with the French."

"He spoke thus but to cast dust into your eyes," Kennedy affirmed flatly. "In any case, you should not have come to him. Besides, in spite of his refusal of yesterday, you have come to him again, knowing, as

he told you, that such communications are forbidden. Why?"

Joscelyn looked at him reproachfully. There seemed to be a vague hint of suspicion of her in his voice, and that wounded her. "I do not understand your tone, Hugh," she said. "Yesterday I lost, somewhere, the locket that Catalina gave me, and which holds a picture of my father. I went to see whether, mayhap, I had dropped it in Lyddius' house."

Hugh's face cleared at her ready explanation, and one which seemed most plausible, yet he could not leave the matter thus. "You were rash, Joscelyn, to go to him at all; rash to write to Montcalm without first asking counsel from older and wiser heads among your friends; and most rash to give color to gossip of ill-natured tongues by coming to this man's house at an hour uncommon early for a maid gently bred as yourself to be abroad alone in the town."

"'Twas my duty to do as seemed me best," she retorted with dignity. "General Abercrombie said that he would believe Montcalm, and when the thought came to me to write to the French general, the duty of doing it was so plain to me that I needed not to ask advice. It was for my father's sake, the matter is urgent, and why should I have delayed, when by so doing I might have lost opportunity to find a messenger who could go at once? And why should I not come early to seek what I lost, and which I dearly prize, when, had I waited, it might be gone beyond recovery? You wrong me, Hugh."

"I trust 'twill all be rightly understood by those who count themselves privileged to judge of it," sighed

Kennedy. Again his brow had clouded, for he was well aware that however indulgently her friends might regard an act so natural, though so impulsive, that if this matter should come to General Abercrombie's ears, he would take no light view of it.

They went on in silence to the Schuyler door, and there, Joscelyn, remembering how staunch a friend Kennedy had always been, spoke beseechingly. "Have faith in me yourself, Hugh, whoever else may doubt."

Kennedy's answer was instant, and from the bottom of his heart. "Ay, Joscelyn, that I will, while I have life."

The loss that Joscelyn had sustained was the one absorbing topic of conversation between herself and her friends during breakfast, and through the hours that followed, but she, keeping in mind Hugh's disapproval of what she had done, could not bring herself to speak of her early morning quest for her locket in the town. In the meantime, a second and diligent search was made of the house, in closets, in crevices of chairs and sofas. Madame Schuyler gave orders to the house servants to be constantly on the lookout for it. Colonel Schuyler sent Titus out into the town to post notices of the loss in taverns and public places, offering a suitable reward for its recovery.

Having done his kindly part, the Colonel retired to his office, to await the arrival of General Abercrombie, and Sir William Johnson, who were in the habit of coming to him almost daily at this period, to make plans, and estimate resources, for the vast campaign which was to be inaugurated against Ticonderoga in the following summer.

Their coming was not long delayed, and Sir William brought with him Hugh Kennedy, who in his service as a ranger under Major Robert Rogers, had learned the lay of the land around Ticonderoga, and could give much helpful information for their guidance.

They had not much more than started their discussion, when Titus announced that Ambrose Jenkins was come again, asking for a few moments' speech with Colonel Schuyler.

Abercrombie pushed back the map which he had just spread out upon the table in order to have Hugh verify for him some landmarks in the neighborhood of the fortress. "This fellow's business gives us scant opportunity for aught else," he said testily.

"I'll make short work of him this time," promised Schuyler.

General Johnson leaned back good-humoredly. Inured by his experience in dealing with Indians, to frequent and lengthy interruptions in the midst of the transaction of important business, he seldom lost his equanimity.

"What is it now, Jenkins?" demanded Colonel Schuyler, when the redemptioner had appeared.

Coming to the table, Jenkins laid before him Joscelyn's locket. "This, sir," he replied.

"You might have left this with the owner," frowned the Colonel, "instead of interrupting me here, in the midst of business."

"By no means, sir, if you please," objected Jenkins meekly. "This locket, I found by good luck, this morning, soon after your man had posted notice of its loss on the tavern door. 'Twas considerable more than half

buried in the soft mud, a yard or so away from the doorstep of Lyddius, the Dutch trader, him as is suspected of having dealings with the French. 'Twas only that the sun struck the edge of it where it showed above mud that made the yellow catch my eye, sir."

"I see no reason in that for your making a special point of bringing it to me."

"If you'll open the locket, sir," persisted Jenkins, shoving it a little closer to him, "you'll be glad enough, I believe, that I've brought it to you, instead of to Miss Joscelyn."

Colonel Schuyler made a gesture of distaste. "If it be something of a private nature," he said, "I have no wish to look within."

"It should not be private from you, sir, nor from these gentlemen. You should know what this maid is like who's harbored in your house."

Philip Schuyler reproved him by a dignified glance. Nevertheless, more to refute the implication which lurked in the redemptioner's tone, than from any doubt of Joscelyn, he opened the locket and looked carelessly at the miniature inside.

"A most excellent portrayal of my good friend, Captain Ralph Armstrong," he commented coldly.

"You'll notice, sir, that the picture don't quite fit into the case," suggested Jenkins. "A little loose, and a bit of white beneath it, ain't there?"

The words had scarcely left his lips before there was a swift awakening of interest on the part of everyone in the room. General Abercrombie sat a full inch higher in his chair, and fastened his gaze intently on the bauble in Colonel Schuyler's palm. William Johnson's keen

eyes grew keener yet, and he bent far forward, in his desire to know what that bit of white might be. Kennedy sat petrified, filled with a dread of he knew not what.

"Mightn't it be well to lift the picture out, sir?" suggested Jenkins again.

Obedying the suggestion against his will, Philip Schuyler set his long finger-nail to the edge of the miniature and pried the picture out without difficulty. In the space behind it lay a tissue-like sheet of folded paper.

In a fascinated silence the four men stared at it.

"Perhaps when you've read what's on that paper, sir, you may be able to guess why Miss Joscelyn might be more than common anxious to get back her locket,—anxious enough to come to the Dutchman's house before the town was up, to inquire for it perhaps, as I saw her do from my garret window." Having delivered himself of this, the redemptioner stood back a pace where he could the better watch the countenances of all.

Colonel Schuyler, opening the paper slowly, read what it contained, and in ominous quiet, offered the sheet to General Abercrombie.

The scarlet of that gentleman's face waxed purple as he scanned it. "The jade! The sly jade! Worthy daughter of a traitor," he sputtered, and clapped the paper into the waiting palm of Johnson.

As it went thus from one to another, Ambrose Jenkins was satisfied that it had told heavily against Joscelyn, for in girlish words, and in an unmistakably girlish hand, the missive offered General Montcalm, in return for his written testimony to General Abercrombie that her father was guiltless of the accusation preferred

against him, to betray on her part to the French, favorably placed as she was for such a service, whatever she could discover that could be to their benefit.

The profound silence that followed the perusal, was broken by General Abercrombie, speaking sharply, and shaking the letter at his host. "Send for the girl, Colonel Schuyler. We'll confound her brazen face with this."

Overlooking the discourtesy of Abercrombie's manner, Colonel Schuyler rose and pulled the bell-rope.

While they awaited Joscelyn's coming, Abercrombie refolded the letter, returned it to the locket, pressed the miniature down upon it, and snapped shut the lid.

Entering hastily, Joscelyn found three grave-faced men, and a grave-faced youth, awaiting her, and at a yard's distance from the table around which they sat, Ambrose Jenkins stood, more deprecating, more respectfully solicitous to do what a sensitive conscience required of him than ever. She gave no heed to the expression on the faces of the men. She saw naught but the gleaming golden thing upon the table. Abercrombie indicated it with his plump forefinger. "This is your gewgaw, mistress, is it not?" he demanded harshly.

The cry of relief and joy checked on her lips by the sternness of his manner, Joscelyn answered without hesitation, "Oh, yes, indeed it is, General Abercrombie."

She came with hand outstretched to receive it, but he withheld it from her. "You lost this yesterday, when you went to visit Philip Lyddius, the Dutch trader, did you not?" he catechized her.

Joscelyn flashed reproach at Hugh Kennedy. Could it be that he, the only one except Bright Waters, who

knew of her going thither, could have betrayed her confidence? He assured her by his look that this was not so.

Her gaze traveled back to Abercrombie. "Yes, General Abercrombie," she replied.

"And the nature of your errand?"

There was not a man at the table but resented hotly his censorious manner, but none could interfere, for it was his right, by virtue of his high position, to arraign as he pleased this daughter of an officer under his military jurisdiction.

Joscelyn colored deeply. "I would rather not answer that question, General Abercrombie," was her low-voiced answer.

"It was an evil errand," said Abercrombie sternly. "But you need not state it. Yon tell-tale bauble has done it for you."

"My locket!" gasped Joscelyn in utmost astonishment. "What more can it have told you than that I lost it?"

"Take it," he thundered, "and open it."

He tossed it to her imperiously, and Joscelyn, wondering at his unaccountable churlishness, caught the locket, and undid the clasp. She held it out upon the palm for all to see. "It has my father's miniature within," she testified, her innocent gaze traveling from one to the other in mute inquiry as to the meaning of all this.

From Abercrombie's contemptuous look it went, past General Johnson's countenance stirred by warring opinions, past Hugh's troubled eyes, past Jenkins' inscrutable, and obsequious figure, to rest at last upon Colonel Schuyler, pale, sorrowful, but kindly.

"What is it that you mean?" she cried with a poignant note. "You speak and look as though I were some criminal brought to judgment."

"You feign well for so young a wench," laughed Abercrombie cynically. "Lift out that picture, mistress."

More deeply astonished than before, Joscelyn did as she was bid, sure that whatever strange suspicion was poisoning his mind against her would presently be demonstrated to be unfounded.

But when she saw the folded paper that lay back of the miniature, she started back as though a serpent had stung her, and her face went white. What new ill turn of fate was this, hid in that crumpled bit of tissue, so mysteriously come to this place?

"Open it, wench, and read," Abercrombie flung at her.

She read, let fall the paper, and her trembling fingers passed across her eyelids as though to brush away a nightmare. Then she looked upon them all, and spoke, in a voice low and piercing.

"You could believe this of me?—You—my friends?"

The reproach in her tones was more than William Johnson could bear. Shoving back his chair with an impulsive movement, he was about to go to her, but Abercrombie rebuked him primly:

"One moment, Sir William, one moment. We'll have due ceremony, if you please."

He fixed his accusing eyes upon Joscelyn. "You have written to the enemy," he began.

"I have," admitted she, brokenly, "but not this. You said that you would believe General Montcalm, and so

I wrote to him. I went to Lyddius, it is true, believing him to be loyal, and he refused to find me a messenger. I lost my locket by the way, but of this paper I know nothing. My letter, which contained no such base and treacherous words, has already gone to him by some messenger, whose name I do not know."

Her voice steadied as she went on pleading her cause. "When General Montcalm's answer comes, and I know he will answer if my message reaches him, you will see from his words that I have made him no such offer as yonder tissue contains. Punish me, if you must. Lyddius told me that to communicate with the enemy carried a penalty, but I am willing to bear it for my father's sake, whatever it may be."

Abercrombie hurled his answer at her ruthlessly: "That penalty, according to the military law is death."

"Death!" echoed Joscelyn, with paling cheek. Her hands went to her breast as though she had received a sword thrust.

"Death," repeated Abercrombie, relentlessly, "A traitor's death."

The girl's voice rose in wild protest. "No, no. Not that. Punishment for this disloyal letter, yes, if I had writ it. But not for my own harmless one, surely not for that. 'Tis monstrous that you should count me traitor. Monstrous!"

Abercrombie went on without mercy. "The law reads, 'To hold correspondence with an enemy of His Majesty, or give advice or intelligence by letters, signs, messages, or tokens, or any manner whatsoever, carries the penalty of death.' You have corresponded with the enemy, as you have admitted, and no matter what the substance

of your other letter, sent by a messenger, as you claim, you are guilty."

To hide the triumph which he feared he might betray, Ambrose Jenkins resorted to that favorite ruse of his, and bent low, on pretence of gartering up his hose.

Colonel Schuyler, the veins in his forehead swelled almost to bursting from the indignation that he felt at such treatment of a helpless girl, nevertheless sat in silence, biding his time.

Not so William Johnson. Sternly as he was apt to rule his hot Irish blood, it could rise, and he leapt to his feet, smiting his massive palms together. "We go too fast, General Abercrombie. 'Tis true that we have here a letter, which upon the face of it would seem to be writ by this poor lass, but she says no, and that her true message has gone forward to the Frenchman. We've got to see his answer first, before we can judge her fairly. Moreover, there's qualifying clause to that law that you've just quoted, sir. It reads, 'or such other punishment as court martial may designate.' As I know well, that punishment may be very light." Abercrombie flushed a rich purple. Martinet that he was, his practice was ever to follow the extreme in any law or rule.

"You must admit that, sir," insisted Johnson angrily.

"Yes, yes," fumed Abercrombie, "for lesser offences, but for treachery the punishment is death."

William Johnson, wresting the office of questioner from the British general, turned to Joscelyn, and his tones melted to fatherly kindness. "Who carried your message, child?"

"A Caughnawaga, whose name, as I said before, I do not know," murmured Joscelyn faintly.



"Death," repeated Abercrombie—"a traitor's death"



"You gave it to him with your own hand?" went on Johnson.

"Nay, sir. 'Twas a friend who took it from me to give to him."

"And this friend's name?"

"That I must not tell you," returned Joscelyn quickly.

Sir William's brows were lifted in surprise, "And why not, lass?"

"That, too, I must not tell," she answered steadfastly. "If penalties there be for this, I alone will bear them. No friend shall suffer because of help given me or mine."

"Well spoken, my girl," cried Johnson admiringly. "Loyal to father and friend, loyal to country say I. 'Twould take more proof than this locket appears to furnish to convince me otherwise."

"You must confess, Sir William," broke in Abercrombie, snatching back the lead, "that without other evidence at hand we must go by what we have here, which is enough to hang anyone."

"But not too soon," put in Philip Schuyler, who had waited patiently for his opportunity, and now seized it. "If, as Joscelyn has said, and I believe her, that another message has been sent by her, and that she knows naught of this in the locket, General Montcalm's reply, if he sends one, will come within the month. If by his answer we are convinced that her letter to him was blameless, the punishment, if any at all, would be light. Is not that true, General Abercrombie?"

"Ahem; I suppose so, I suppose so," conceded Abercrombie gruffly.

"Then must not this matter, in barest justice, be held over, as we hold her father's, until further proof?" continued Schuyler.

Joscelyn in her place, Hugh in his, the redemptioner, his eyes glittering like steel under his deep brows, all waited tensely for his rejoinder.

It came with sledge-hammer force. "Yes, with this troublesome wench in jail,—the common jail, behind stout bars, while we wait."

Philip Schuyler stiffened. This British officer had overstepped the bounds of his endurance. "You forget, sir," he reminded him, with asperity, "that there is an outbreak of small-pox in the jail. You would scarcely thrust a tenderly brought up maid into such hideous danger as that, I hope."

"Where then?" demanded the other tartly.

"Here, in my own house," answered Schuyler. "She shall be put under lock, if you so insist, and kept secure as in any jail. But in any case she should not be publicly disgraced, nor lack the comforts due to her station, before her guilt is proved. You have my word of honor that she will be kept confined, if she is left under my roof."

"Have it so, have it so," puffed Abercrombie, "but remember, Schuyler, I hold you responsible for whatever may come of such foolish leniency."

"I willingly accept all responsibility, sir," was the icy rejoinder.

"Let her be put into immediate confinement, then, so that we can get back to these other matters, I beg of you," said Abercrombie impatiently, drumming on the cover of his snuff-box with his polished finger-nails.

Sir William Johnson could not let her go without an encouraging word from him. His voice rang out with decision. "We'll see this through, my lass. Right's with you, somehow, and we'll have it out, begorra."

Colonel Schuyler rose in silence to conduct her from the room.

Hugh Kennedy, his swift request for a moment's speech with the prisoner granted, sprang after her, but she, with a proud gesture, repelled the hand that he held out. She had caught an expression upon his face when Abercrombie had first arraigned her, that had cut her to the soul. It had come and gone in a flash, to be replaced by one of dogged resolution to remain unconvinced, in spite of evidence the most damaging, but the very intensity of his look had betrayed how great the effort he was obliged to make, in order to maintain his trust in her.

"When I give my hand, Hugh," she said, striving to control her trembling lip, "it is to a friend, and not to one who could for a moment doubt me."

"'Twas bitter to me to seem to doubt you, Joscelyn," blurted out Kennedy, "but can you not see what strain is put upon belief? These words, in your own hand, as it would appear, this locket from your own neck, and found in such a place! Bethink you. Would I not be more than human not to wonder whether, in mistaken zeal for your father's honor, and distracted out of all measure, you may not have sacrificed your own?" He bent upon her a penetrating look that scorched her through and through as by a flame.

"How could such a sacrifice as that serve him?" demanded Joscelyn, with curling lip. "Would it not put

upon his name a stain even more hateful to him than anything that he himself has been accused of? And could you think that I would so forget my duty to my country as to sacrifice it, even to save him? Never would I have believed that you could think me capable of such treachery." Her eyes blazed in indignation and wounded pride, for until this morning she would have staked her all upon Kennedy's unshakable faith in her.

"Nay, Joscelyn, do not think that I would believe you guilty till it was proved. Yet you must grant the black look of this in the eyes of others. You have confessed that you went to seek a messenger, and where. Had you never gone to Lyddius, I should be certain that this is all some foul work of the redemptioner, but as it is, can you not see that't would try the faith of any man, however dear to him the maid might be?"

Joscelyn did not answer him. The blow that she had received had been too heavy. A dull pain in her breast, she passed on to where Colonel Schuyler awaited her at the stair's foot.

Kennedy looked after her crestfallen. Her bent head, her drooping figure, roused in him a fierce longing to protect her against all the world from every consequence of rash act, or mistaken zeal, a defiant impulse to believe in her truth, her patriotic spirit against the most convincing evidence, against all reason. Then he strode back into the room which she had left, feeling that the autumn sunshine that flooded it mocked him.

CHAPTER XXVI



MADE prisoner in the house of her friends, and forced into inaction, Joscelyn had abundant time for unhappy musings.

Colonel Schuyler had himself taken her, with every mark of courteous consideration, to that same room which less than two days ago she had entered as a beloved and welcome guest, and which was now to become her cell. With a manner which spoke plainly of how loth he was to perform such an unpleasant duty, he turned the key in the lock. What his inmost opinion of her might be, she could not divine, yet she felt sure that he gave her the benefit of every doubt.

An hour later Catalina came, by permission of General Abercrombie, a woeful figure, her swollen, reddened eyes testifying to her emotion over the disgrace which had fallen upon her friend. She poured out her grief unrestrainedly, in youthful fashion, vowing that, for her own part, even if Joscelyn had done this thing of which she was accused, she would still love her as before, could not but insist that the deed was not so black as it seemed.

She had cried, as though the words were wrung from her, "Could it ever be true, that for such a purpose, you would use the keepsake that I gave you in love? Oh, Joscelyn! Or that you would have used your father's miniature to hide a traitor's message, whatever the reason? Oh, Joscelyn, Joscelyn! I do not believe you could,

but tell your Catalina, with your own lips, that it never, never could have been."

"Catalina, your mere asking hurts me cruelly," sighed poor Joscelyn. "Believe that I have told the truth,—that time will prove it so, and that the rest is but some serpent's coil. Have I ever done aught before, that you should think this of me now?"

"Nay Nay," confessed Catalina. "You were ever my true, my darling Joscelyn, sweetest maid of all." She threw herself prone upon the sofa in a tempest of sobs.

Joscelyn laid a shaking hand upon the blond head buried in the bright chintz-covered cushions. "Believe in me still, Catalina," she begged mournfully, but could trust herself to say no more.

Catalina's hand, wet with tears, stole out, found Joscelyn's and pressed it to her lips. "I will. I will," she promised, with desperate loyalty.

It was night before Madame Schuyler could come to her. Throughout the day, as mistress of the mansion, and hostess to many guests, she had been so bound by her manifold duties that she had been obliged to send her first words of love and sympathy by Catalina. When all her guests were gone, she sat long by her drawing-room fire, thinking of the many harrowing experiences that had fallen to the lot of Joscelyn's bright young spirit in less than half a year, and of how that same brave spirit was now bowed down under the burden of disgrace, a disgrace, that convincing though the evidences of guilt might be, Madame Schuyler's every instinct told her was altogether unmerited.

The girl's own words to herself came to her mind, words spoken on the eve of her departure for Fort Wil-

liam Henry. "Am I not a daughter of the forts, a soldier's maid? And shall I not follow my father and mother *wherever duty to their country summons them?*"

Margaretta Schuyler was convinced that the one who had spoken thus, had done naught in her short life of which, if the truth were known, she need be ashamed.

She lifted her heavy frame from her chair, took up the candle from the table at her side, and went on firm yet quiet tread to the door that shut Joscelyn away from the free world outside its threshold, as relentlessly as though it were one of iron bars.

Madame Schuyler laid her hand upon the knob and turned it, but the door held. Then she realized that she had forgotten to bring the key. Never before had she come to a door in her own house, and found it locked against her free entrance. It gave her a curious sensation to find it so with this one now. But tonight, weary as she was, she could not go back to obtain the key.

Standing without, she spoke through the white panels. "Joscelyn," she called, and waited.

There was a faint stirring in the room, and a choked voice answered her, "Yes, Aunt Schuyler."

"My dear," and each word came with the tremor of deep feeling, "I have forgot the key, and so cannot enter. But I have come to tell you this: remember that whatever comes, whatever may have been, that I trust you; that I firmly believe, no matter what the appearance, that you are innocent of any wrong-doing; that whatever you may say, or do, or withhold, that it has back of it only the noblest of motives and intent."

"Aunt Schuyler,—oh, Aunt Schuyler, if you could but know how your words comfort me."

The anguish in the girl's voice pierced the good dame's heart. "Rest you, my dear, in that confidence, and in this above all: the Lord will bring truth to light, and justice shall in the end prevail."

As her footsteps receded, Joscelyn fell upon her knees before the door through which her faithful friend had spoken, and bowing her head upon the sill, lifted her heart to God in an intensity of supplication.

Shut alone in that room, time crept on leaden feet, for the girl. She suffered no privations except of personal liberty, lacked no comfort that her friends could lavish upon her, for Colonel Schuyler and his dame brought every argument to bear upon General Abercrombie, to win this much leniency toward her.

Had she no weightier matters to press upon her spirit, the monotony alone would have irked a maid so naturally disposed to activity as herself. This monotony was broken by daily visits of a few moments from Catalina, and from Madame Schuyler, and every morning Colonel Schuyler looked in upon her to bid her be of good heart. There were, besides, the entrances of Titus with her meals, and of Diana to care for her room. To occupy her, Madame Schuyler brought her some of her own books, and there were always knitting and needlework to fill the hours.

At the best speed that the Caughnawaga could make, well nigh a month must pass before he could reach Montreal and return, and until he came again, nothing could be done in her father's matter any more than in her own.

To Hugh Kennedy she gave many a wistful thought. Her resentment toward him had died out speedily, to

be replaced by sore regret that she had refused him her hand. What right had she, she asked herself, to require that his faith should remain unshaken when there seemed so much ground for suspicion? He had gone back, now, to his duty under Major Robert Rogers, scouting from Fort Edward to Ticonderoga, to Crown Point, to any hazardous spot where he might be sent. Their days of comradeship were definitely over, even of friendship, too, it seemed. Her heart ached at this, and sometimes thick tears fell.

Most often her thoughts were concentrated upon her father, whom she had found, but whose good name she had had no power to redeem; and upon her mother, lost, and in all probability never to be recovered in this world.

The mystery of the two letters, in such accurate imitation of her father's writing and of her own, which Jenkins had produced, puzzled her exceedingly, nor could she guess his motive for his persistent persecution of her father and herself, although she was convinced that he was at heart their enemy, and in some way personally responsible for these false letters, whether or not he was the forger of them.

Thus the weeks went by. November was almost half gone, and still no messenger had come to Joscelyn from General Montcalm. This confirmed General Abercrombie in his opinion that the girl had not really sent a letter, but had merely claimed to have done so, in order to gain time. He was obstinately fixed in his belief that she was the author of the one found in the locket.

While his conviction became stronger daily, and Joscelyn's hopes grew less, the redemptioner's confidence

in the success of his scheme increased. He had no manner of doubt that Joscelyn had sent a messenger, as she had declared, and he had shrewdly guessed that that messenger had been Hooting Owl. He kept vigilant watch, therefore, for the coming of the redskin, intending to bribe, to cajole, to threaten, and if need be to betray him, in order to compel from him whatever answer, if any, Montcalm might send.

His own movements unrestricted, he strolled about the town, in apparent idleness, but in actuality keenly alert to intercept the Caughnawaga.

Anneke had but fleeting glimpses of him in those days, although she knew that if some business that he had on hand, turned out as he desired, that he meant to break away by stealth to Quebec before long, and there enter the service of Monsieur Bigot, Minister of Finance, under whose corrupt régime great fortunes were to be made, and with whom rascals were held in greater esteem than honest men. He had promised that she should go with him, and dazzling visions of her future life with him in the Canadian city floated before her mind, in pleasing contrast to her dull existence in her Dutch home.

Matters stood thus, one November evening, when old Titus mounted the stairs to Joscelyn's room, bearing her supper-tray. He handled it with unusual care and pride, for among its contents was a plate of olykoecks, prepared by Rachel, the cook, and which he fondly hoped might tempt his favorite.

He found her seated upon a footstool before the fire, looking with unseeing eyes into the embers. He placed the tray upon a small mahogany table, and drew it

closer to the hearth. Taking up the tongs, he skilfully mended the fire, casting compassionate glances, out of the tail of his eye, meanwhile, at the lonely, saddened girl, who made no move toward the food he had brought her, and who scarcely seemed to observe his presence.

When he had lighted the candles, and adjusted the tray an inch more accurately upon the table, he was about to go, but her downcast countenance, and hopeless mien troubled his kind soul more than usual.

He reached the door, paused upon the threshold, and turning his old grey head to her, let fall over his shoulder: "Miss Joscelyn, chile, dis jess yore dark and heavy time, but you'se gwine come out 'fore long into de blessed sunshine."



CHAPTER XXVII



THERE came an evening a few days later when a wagoner, back from Fort Edward, brought to Colonel Schuyler this brief communication from Hugh Kennedy:

“Spying very near to the Fort called Carillon with my Glass, I did plainly see, shackled, and walking at Exercise, in the Enclosure with other Prisoners, Captain Ralph Armstrong. I Pray you, Sir, have a Care to the Redemptioner, Ambrose Jenkins.”

Having read Hugh’s missive, Captain Schuyler went at once to his wife with it, and was closeted with her for some time. Shortly after he left her, Titus rode away upon Wolf toward Schenectady.

He came back from his errand next morning, before the Dutch clocks of Albany pointed to the hour of noon, and bobbing along behind him, upon a rough-coated farm horse was Giles Coles, prepared to give an account of a search that he had made, at the Colonel’s request, of the personal effects of Ambrose Jenkins, the redemptioner.

But full two hours before they arrived at the Schuyler door, Hooting Owl had presented his wampum road-belts, marked with the totem of the Turtle, and the sign of General Montcalm, asking to be allowed to give a message to Joscelyn Armstrong, whom he called Oniata, from the great war-chief of his French Father.

This Colonel Schuyler had of himself no power to

permit. The very nature of the charges against Joscelyn and her father forbade that Hooting Owl should do this except in the presence of General Abercrombie, and with his consent.

Word was despatched, therefore, to General Abercrombie, and to General Johnson, that the looked-for messenger had at last arrived, and begging their presence in Colonel Schuyler's office at the hour of twelve.

Hence, when Coles was ushered in, these gentlemen had come, and were in their customary places about the office table: General Abercrombie, in blazing uniform and pompous state at the head of the table, the locket, and the fictitious letters lying in front of him; Sir William Johnson, in blue satin with salmon-colored facings at his right; Colonel Schuyler, in black silk velvet, and lace ruffles at his left.

By the hearthstone, sinewy and lithe in his fringed and beaded garments of doe-skin, his feet encased in heavy moccasins worked with porcupine quills, was Hooting Owl, his arms folded, his bearing dignified and stately. From the beaded tobacco pouch at his side he had drawn a letter which bore the seal of the Marquis de Montcalm. The Caughnawaga kept his fingers firmly closed upon it.

Ambrose Jenkins, alert and apprehensive, stood near the door, facing the rest. When he had that morning received a summons from Colonel Schuyler to wait upon him at his mansion, it had greatly disconcerted him, for it portended that, in spite of his vigilance, a letter from General Montcalm must have come through, and he feared it would tax his wits to the utmost to wrest the French general's words sufficiently from their true mean-

ing to play upon and strengthen the suspicions which General Abercrombie already entertained against Joscelyn. He fortified himself with the thought that her own letter being inaccessible to her judges, he might contend that it had been of the same import as the one which the locket had concealed.

Coles, having made proper obeisance to his superiors, was waved to a station beside Hooting Owl, and from there recognized Ambrose Jenkins with a glance of withering contempt.

The entrance of the farmer had increased the redemptioner's uneasiness. He thought of the letter from Joscelyn to Betsy Coles, which he had not yet had opportunity to return to the kitchen cupboard, and wondered whether its absence could have been discovered, and attributed to himself.

To this assemblage came Joscelyn, pale, and quivering in every nerve, yet filled, nevertheless, with a sense of elation, for Catalina had apprized her of Hooting Owl's arrival, and she felt that whatever reply Montcalm might have sent by him, it would at least partially vindicate her truthfulness in the eyes of her judges. That much gained, all the rest that she so ardently desired might perhaps follow.

She passed Ambrose Jenkins, drawing her skirts aside to avoid even the slightest contact with him, whom she rightly deemed the author of her misfortunes, and stopped a yard beyond him, as though doubtful as to whether she might advance further.

As she paused, General Abercrombie said, with a hauteur designed to overawe the Caughnawaga, "The

prisoner may receive the message from General Montcalm."

Gravely and ceremoniously, Hooting Owl presented the letter, and returned to his position upon the hearth.

Joscelyn, receiving it with unsteady fingers, eagerly broke the seal. As she looked down upon the beautiful script that the unfolded sheet disclosed, the parchment rattled in her hand like leaves in the wind, her head swam, and she could not see.

Sir William Johnson thrust a chair under her, and she sank into it.

"Read it for me, General Johnson," she begged.

In a resonant voice that filled the room, he did as she asked, in the midst of the breathless attention of everyone.

"My dear Mademoiselle: (Montcalm wrote)

I must first scold you a little for running away without my permission, but perhaps in your place I should have done the same. You have by no means been forgotten by me; no, nor have I forgotten my promise to assist you to find your much loved parents. In your mother's case, I have hope. As to your father, the accusations brought against him are wholly false in every particular. Never has he given aid of any sort whatever to the French. Moreover Captain d'Hebecourt, commandant of Fort Carillon, advises me that Captain Armstrong is a prisoner there, and as you have said, slowly recovered from death's door, after more than three months in the prison hospital. It will be my great pleasure to arrange at the earliest possible moment for an exchange of prisoners between your British general and myself, so that he may be restored to your arms."

Joscelyn, hanging intently upon each word as it fell from General Johnson's lips, gave such an ecstatic cry at this, that it stirred profoundly every heart except that of the redemptioner.

Abercrombie, however, was careful to disguise his feeling. The letter was not yet read through, and he must first see whether or no there had been any favors offered by the prisoner to Montcalm as a return for what he here promised.

Eyelids narrowed to a mere slit, Ambrose Jenkins waited too, hoping that in the last few words at least he would find the opening that he sought.

Sir William read on:

"And now, my dear mademoiselle, lest your father's accusers cast doubt upon the honorable nature of your letter to me, I send it back to you with this of mine, so that they may read for themselves these words from a daughter's heart that do her so much credit.

"With my most distinguished sentiments of regard and admiration for your courage and devoted filial love, I am,

"Your obedient servant,
de Montcalm."

Colonel Schuyler, watching the face of the redemptioner closely during the reading of this letter, had seen his jaws drop involuntarily, and his eyes dilate, at these final paragraphs, and noted also, how instantly he recovered himself, making of his visage as impenetrable a mask as before.

A deep sigh of relief escaped from Joscelyn at Montcalm's protecting thoughtfulness for her. She well re-

membered what her own letter had contained, and gave but casual attention to it while Sir William read it also, but Jenkins, his teeth set hard behind the firm line of his lips, lost no single word of it, for in this was his last hope of finding somewhat that he could twist to his purpose.

The letter began by recalling herself to Montcalm's memory, reminded him of his generous promise, explained the cause of her flight from Ticonderoga, detailed briefly her present trouble, and made an ardent plea that he would, by whatever means lay in his power exonerate her father. It was the simple outpouring of a young girl's innocent heart begging to have righted an enormous wrong to one whom she loved.

General Johnson paused in the reading of the epistle. His eyes traveling ahead, had already grasped the content of her closing words.

"Mark you now," he said impressively, throwing back his head in lion fashion, "mark what this maid promises in return for what she asks."

"It is that promise which most concerns us, Sir William," stated General Abercrombie judicially. "The rest we may dismiss from our attention."

Jenkins pricked up his ears. There had been a promise made, then. What was its nature? What should he be able to make of it? His anxiety was acute.

Slowly, deliberately, so that every word might fall upon the hearing of his listeners with due weight, Sir William proceeded:

"In return for such great goodness on your part, what have I to offer you? Naught, Monsieur le Marquis, but

my undying gratitude, my unceasing prayers to God for His richest blessings upon you."

Silence fell.

Joscelyn, her speaking eyes fastened upon her judge, waited for his word. To her mind these two letters must have amply proved her own and her father's innocence, and it was evident that they had produced a mollifying effect upon Abercrombie. He bent his eyes upon her where she sat, tense and motionless, her hands tightly clasped in her lap, and his gaze was tintured with kindness.

Jenkins took a swift step forward. He must not let the tide swing in this girl's favor if he could prevent it.

Before he could essay to speak, Colonel Schuyler took up the thread.

"Gentlemen," he said, producing Kennedy's brief note, "I had this last night from the young ranger, Hugh Kennedy, and it confirms what General Montcalm and the prisoner have said, as to Armstrong's confinement at Ticonderoga." He read the message aloud, except that portion which warned him against Ambrose Jenkins.

Blood flowed in a warm stream to Joscelyn's pale cheek, and her eyes brightened as she listened. Hugh was true and loyal friend after all, diligent to aid her where he could.

"And now, gentlemen," pursued Colonel Schuyler, "bearing in mind these three letters just read to you, what conclusions must be drawn concerning those others, so radically at variance with them, brought to us by this redemptioner? Think you that those could ever have been penned by the ones accused?"

William Johnson shook his head in strong negation. General Abercrombie sat ruminating.

Jenkins made haste to seize his chance, before any other had time to speak. "By your leave, sirs," he began obsequiously. "They say all's fair in war. Like enough General Montcalm thinks as others do in that. What's to keep master, in the first place, from trying to buy his freedom whatever way he can? Don't that letter sent to me prove it? And don't Miss Joscelyn think the same, according to the letter in the locket I was lucky enough to find in the mud, however she saw fit to change, and write a second letter when she finds she's lost the first, and thinks on the danger of what she meant to do? No matter what's in the letter this Frenchman sent back, t'other was in her locket when she lost it."

Joscelyn cast him a glance of contemptuous indignation, which he feigned not to see, where he stood with hand on hip, looking straight at Abercrombie.

"A very plausible argument, Jenkins," said Abercrombie, veering away from Joscelyn like a weathercock.

"And one which he seems over-zealous that we shall accept," observed Colonel Schuyler, calmly, for Jenkins, in his rising concern for himself, had allowed more of vehemence to creep into his manner than he had been aware of.

"Now, with your permission, General Abercrombie," continued the Colonel, "we shall no doubt find it of advantage to hear what Giles Coles, here, can tell us."

Abercrombie cleared his throat importantly, and granted, "Let him speak, by all means, Colonel."

Joscelyn sat forward on her chair edge. What could

Giles Coles have to say that had any bearing on her case?

Under shelter of his homespun cloak, Ambrose Jenkins clenched his hands till the knuckles turned white.

Hooting Owl, motionless in his place on the hearthstone, might have been a statue cast in bronze.

Giles Coles responded with alacrity. "There's a deal that I could say, sirs, and something as I can show. First off, this here Jenkins come to my master a year ago, a common redemptioner, his service bought off the ship captain for his passage on the Dover. A lazy rascal he shows himself, fast enough, and has to be give a day in stocks. It bettered him of his shirking, and his surly ways, above skin at least, but he'd a slick way with him, after stocks, as I mistrusted off and on, though nothing done so's you could nail it. He's hated master, and Giles Coles too, ever since, I'd be ready to vow, for master upheld me in the matter of the stocks."

Jenkins threw him a venomous look at this which sufficiently bore out his last statement.

"Now master's accused, and master's daughter that's as innocent a lamb as ever drew breath gets held prisoner," continued Coles, his tongue fully loosed. "When the Colonel's word was brung by Titus last night to have me search through this villium's stuff, and see if aught agin him was to be found, I went at the job in a hurry. A clever rogue he is, though, and not a smidge could I find to nail him by."

A flicker of scornful amusement passed over the redemptioner's visage, which changed swiftly to one of guarded watchfulness as Coles, digging deep into one of his bulging pockets, produced a bundle of letters.

"Here's master's letters to me from Fort William Henry," he said, clapping them down before Abercrombie. "They're his own handwrite, as I well know. And here's Miss Joscelyn's to my good missus, Betsy Coles, and one missing from among 'em that ne'er went astray afore." He threw a meaning glance in the direction of the redemptioner at this, who returned it boldly.

"Here's their handwrite, sirs, and here's this." From a second capacious pocket he extricated a thick shingle, its surface apparently well scraped and clean. "I found it tossed into a corner on the garret floor, where this dirty rogue sleeps when he's at the farm. He's practised on it to mimick master's handwrite. Cute he thought he was,—thought he'd scraped it clean when he'd done. But"—at this point Coles gave a rich chuckle of triumph, and placed the shingle, scraped side uppermost, upon the table before them all—"there's one little corner here, sirs, as quite accidental, in the dusk o' the garret, he's missed scrapin' off,—just enough to show him up for the dirty forgerer he is. Look, sirs, at master's name where your own sense'll tell you he never writ it, and see it here in his own letter to me." Having produced his evidence, Coles stepped back alongside of Hooting Owl, from which point of observation he glared persistently and accusingly at the trapped redemptioner.

“By Gad!” he pronounced, looking from Schuyler to Johnson, when close scrutiny had shown him that there was no apparent difference in the signatures. “A damnable clever forgery this! These signatures are as like to one another as peas in a pod.”

Joscelyn, half risen from her chair, her breath coming fast, took no thought to the redemptioner, nor to herself. The one thing that sang through her brain was, that whoever might be condemned as guilty, her father's innocence had been made evident.

The redemptioner, a hunted look in his glittering eyes, shifted his position a trifle nearer to the door.

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writing of the father, is the same that has written the letter found in the locket?"

Joscelyn came bolt upright. This was the moment of judgment for her. Her eyes fastened upon Abercrombie, she listened, with all her soul in them, for his reply.

Abercrombie gave a short nod only, but it was one of affirmation.

William Johnson spoke right out. "No doubt of it at all, at all."

Half dazed by this sudden and complete clearing up for her of all that had been puzzling, feeling certain that full exoneration had now been given to her beloved father and herself, Joscelyn sank back weakly into her chair, and covered her face. In the whirl of her joyous emotions, she heard no more for some moments, was utterly lost to what went on around her.

But Colonel Schuyler, determined that every necessary legal step in the course of justice and judgment should be taken, pursued his argument. "Are we not right, then, in supposing this whole matter, from first to last, to have been a malicious plot by this redemptioner, conceived with intent to revenge himself for what had been no more than a well merited punishment for lazy and insubordinate behavior?"

Again the two gave assent.

On velvet foot, unnoticed by all except Hooting Owl, Ambrose Jenkins retreated one step farther toward the door.

"Do I understand, then, that you declare this maid innocent, and released from her imprisonment, and that you restore to her father his untarnished name?"

"I so declare," granted Abercrombie.

"And that this man Jenkins, being guilty of forgery, and wrongful accusations, shall be brought to the bar of justice?"

"No doubt about that now," returned Abercrombie.

Jenkins sidled yet another step nearer to the door.

"Must we not, therefore," demanded Philip Schuyler, "hand him over to the authority of Mayor Van Schaick, to undergo the processes and penalties of the civil law?"

"By all means."

Jenkins, about to turn toward the open door, and make a dash for liberty, was arrested by the words that followed.

"This man has said nothing as yet, in his own defence," went on Schuyler evenly. "Shall he be given opportunity to do so in the presence of this maid, before we summon the officers of the law?"

Abercrombie nodded with due ceremony.

Bent upon escape though he was, Ambrose Jenkins perceived, nevertheless, that the precise moment had not yet arrived for it, for every eye in the room was now fastened upon him. He drew himself to a military erectness, and returned Abercrombie's judicial gaze, Johnson's unconcealed scorn, Schuyler's calm glance, Joscelyn's condemnation, and Giles Coles' triumphant sniff, with a defiant carriage.

He had bethought himself of a more certain method of escape than by taking to his heels. Why not turn informer upon Philip Lyddius and his associates, and upon that impassive savage watching him coldly from the hearthstone? How easily he might purchase clemency for himself by the definite proof which he could furnish, and which the government had so long desired,

concerning the activities of these men. It was the way out for him. He decided to take it.

About to speak, he glanced once more at Hooting Owl. The concentrated gaze of the redskin seemed to read his inmost thoughts, and rivet him with its menace.

It was not those warning eyes, however, that gave him pause.

Rising before his inner sight, came the round face, the drab eyes, the saucy red lips of Anneke Lyddius. In fancy he saw those bright cheeks go white, the eyes drenched in tears, the saucy lips twisted with grief, for to betray her father would mean to bring disaster upon her. For Anneke he had come nearer to feeling genuine affection than for any other human being.

Few were the occasions in Ambrose Jenkins' life in which he freely chose to shelter another at the expense of himself. This was one.

Veering from his first intent, he squared himself to his judges with an indifferent shrug. "Defence?" he sneered, dropping the untutored speech of a farm-hand, which he had so long maintained, "What's to be gained by it? I've suffered under this thick-skulled farmer here, and his master, and I've tried to pay them off. You'd your doubts of the first letter, that I brought you. Yonder bauble," pointing to the locket, "gave me chance for a second. Think you I'd be slow to use it? Send for your officers of the law, and let them—catch me if they can."

By a single bound he reached the door, and was through it, clapping it behind him. So swift and unexpected had been his action, that all but Hooting Owl were unprepared for it, and sat stunned. Only Hooting Owl could have intercepted him in time, but the savage

made no move to hinder him, or to follow, for the redemptioner had held his peace when he might have given damaging evidence against him instead.

"The rogue's escaped," cried Abercrombie throwing up his hands helplessly. "What's to do now?"

Philip Schuyler did not pause to answer. He was already half-way to the street door, William Johnson and Coles at his heels, Joscelyn gaping after them with parted lips.

The men brought up suddenly outside the threshold, for a few yards farther on, livid with rage, every muscle straining to its utmost, was the redemptioner, engaged in a desperate struggle with a robust young British subaltern.

"Help, gentlemen, help!" shouted the subaltern. "Here's a villain, who's wanted on British soil."

Colonel Schuyler, hurrying with the rest to his assistance, recognized the young officer as Lieutenant Crosby, newly arrived from England. "Wanted here, as well," he informed him, briefly.

In short order the redemptioner, helplessly pinioned, and grasped firmly on either side by Sir William and the Lieutenant, with Colonel Schuyler leading, and Coles bringing up the rear, was brought scowling before Abercrombie.

"General Abercrombie," spoke Lieutenant Crosby at once, "in the King's name, I accuse this man, Captain Egbert Lupton, as a deserter, and a traitor. Found guilty in England of numerous forgeries, and betrayal of military secrets to the French, he escaped from his guards, and disappeared, about a year ago. Had he not run

headlong into me, just now, he might have got away altogether."

"You are certain that this is the man?" interrogated Abercrombie, recovered from the disordered state of mind into which the redemptioner's sudden flight had plunged him, and once more the pompous judge.

"Absolutely certain, sir," was the unhesitating response. "I cannot be mistaken."

"Ahem!" Abercrombie cleared his throat importantly. "You arrived at a fortunate moment, Lieutenant. Since this offender, as a soldier, comes under military authority, you will return at once to Fort Frederick, and bring back with you a file of men, to convey him to imprisonment in the fort. Use despatch."

The subaltern, saluting smartly, took himself off, well pleased with his errand, while Sir William Johnson bound the redemptioner securely to a chair. Giles Coles, a satisfied grin on his face, was set to keep guard over him with a loaded musket handed down to him by Colonel Schuyler from its place in the rack over the tiled chimney-piece.

"And now, gentlemen, returning to our interrupted business," said Schuyler, "should we not begin negotiations immediately for the exchange of prisoners suggested by General Montcalm?"

To this General Abercrombie gave assent, and his assurance that it should be done.

Thoroughly pleased with himself, Abercrombie rose now from his chair, and strutted over to where Joscelyn, uncertain as to whether she might go freely forth as yet, sat waiting. "Ahem!" he coughed, settling his cuffs, stiff with gold braid, a trifle more to his liking. "This pretty

lass understands, no doubt, that justice has had to take its proper course, ahem, even in the case of youth and beauty."

"True, sir," admitted she, springing quickly to her feet, and curtseying low in time to evade his unwelcome salute upon her crimson cheek.

General Johnson, casting a side-glance at her, twinkled as he glimpsed her deft movement.

Philip Schuyler came to her. "My child," he said, his voice vibrating unevenly with the strength of his feeling, "that you are free, that you and your good father are cleared of all this hateful coil, warms my heart to its core."

"How much I owe to you that it is so," murmured Joscelyn, her swimming eyes lifted to his.

"Sure, lass," threw in William Johnson, "did you think that any man with blood in his body would stand by and see you wronged?"

Joscelyn smiled at him. "None who knows you, General Johnson, but is certain that you will see justice done."

Escaping once more from an attempt by General Abercrombie at heavy and belated gallantries, Joscelyn went to the Caughnawaga, still motionless by the hearth, waiting, so she thought, for the reward due him for his inestimable service to her.

"Hooting Owl," she said sweetly, offering him her soft white hand, "you and Bright Waters have done far more for me than my father or I can ever repay, but if you will tell Colonel Schuyler what you wish to receive, he will give it to you in my father's name."

The Caughnawaga drew himself up with a proud

dignity. He kept her hand while he spoke. "Hooting Owl is the friend of Oniata," and sincerity was in his sonorous voice. "For Bright Waters' sake and for Oniata's he has done this, and Bright Waters will be pleased. Oniata has given him her thanks. If she will give him her friendship also, he will ask for nothing more."

Joscelyn laid her other hand over the copper-colored hand of the savage. "I am your friend, Hooting Owl, your friend always," she vowed earnestly, "but you must not go without some gift from me."

On the table lay her locket. She remembered seeing Hooting Owl look upon it covetously once in the days gone by, when she had been his captive, and how she had feared that he might take it from her; but he had not touched it. The locket was Catalina's gift, and from it she could not part, but the chain upon which it had been suspended she had worn from early childhood. That she could give. She lifted her hands to her neck and unclasped it.

"You will take this, for my sake, Hooting Owl," she said, laying it in his palm. "Perhaps it might please Bright Waters to wear it for my sake," she added with a faint smile.

The Caughnawaga raised it to his breast. "Hooting Owl takes the yellow wampum of Oniata, his pale-face sister, as a sign of her friendship. He will show it to Bright Waters, that she may see that he has done what she asked. Perhaps she will wear it."

He took from his neck a chain of wampum, and dropped it over Joscelyn's head. "Hooting Owl gives Oniata this belt." He spoke it solemnly, and then, be-

stowing upon Abercrombie, Johnson, and Schuyler, the Indian's short nod of parting, he passed out, and away toward the Mohawk Valley, to tell the daughter of the Eagle that he had bidden good-bye forever to Montreal and its Onontio, and to receive from her the reward which he craved.

"Gentlemen," spoke Colonel Schuyler to his companions, "we must send this child, now, to Madame Schuyler. She has waited for her long enough, and grows impatient, I'll warrant, and Catalina too."

With a light upon her face long absent from it, with a heart buoyant, and freed from its burden of sore pain and heavy despondency, Joscelyn stepped to the door, and as the three stood back to let her pass, she paused upon the threshold, and looked back at those who had been her judges. Two had proved her staunch friends; one had been willing to condemn her; but in her hour of triumph Joscelyn was generous. She swept them one and all her most charming, her most maidenly curtsy.

"Sirs," she said, with a sweet gravity, "I thank you from my heart for your decisions."

Then become child, suddenly, under the surging of her emotions, she fled on winged feet past Titus near the door, past Caesar at the stair's foot, and straight away to Madame Schuyler and Catalina.

The gentlemen came slowly, but Titus ambled unhesitatingly, and with what speed he could make, past the drawing-room door to catch a surreptitious glimpse of what went on within. He returned presently to Caesar to murmur in that worthy's ear, "De sun sure am riz on Miss Joscelyn today, Caesar. It sure am riz."

A brief half hour later, while Joscelyn sat radiant at

dinner at the Schuyler table, the crack of a soldier's musket woke the echoes in Prince Street, and a prisoner, on his way to Fort Frederick, under guard of Lieutenant Crosby and a file of regulars, fell forward upon his face, stone dead.

Captain Egbert Lupton, alias Ambrose Jenkins the redemptioner, had for a second time that day made a desperate and unavailing attempt to escape the course of justice, and the penalty of his misdeeds.

Needles and wool dropped idle into her lap, and she gazed absently into the embers.

Madame Schuyler, fashioning one of those pairs of socks, designed for some infant niece or nephew, with which she was accustomed to employ her industrious fingers, shot her bright needles in and out unceasingly, seeming not to notice the girl's abstraction, although she was well aware of it, and sympathized with its cause.

To the ears of both, as they sat thus, came the heavy jangle of iron bells on a wagon-sledge, a jarring note among the sweeter tones of the light sleighbells. The sound slowed and ceased, as though the vehicle had drawn in before the Schuyler door.

"Hark, Aunt Schuyler! A sledge stops!" exclaimed Joscelyn, and flew to the window, as she had done many times in the past few days. She knew that in some such conveyance as this her father must be brought home, and she went now to see whether this sound and its cessation had any special significance for her.

One glance through the small panes, one thrilling cry, and she vanished into the hallway. Madame Schuyler beside the hearth, Colonel Schuyler in the room beyond, hearing it, knew without doubt that the long desired, the long delayed had come.

Out of the door, down the steps, a crimson robed figure, sped Joscelyn, eyes sparkling, arms open, her spirit outrunning her feet to receive her beloved.

Not *one* of her beloved alone. That fleeting glance through the window-pane had made known to her that Montcalm's "good hope" had been justified, for in the muffled form of a woman seated beside Captain Armstrong in the rude vehicle, concealed though her face

was by the voluminous hood that the bitter cold demanded, Joscelyn recognized her mother.

Attending them was Hugh Kennedy, whom she had neither seen nor heard from since the day when she had refused to allow him to so much as touch her hand, and he it was who now lifted out to her, first her mother, and then her father, from the multitude of fur robes in the wagon bed.

With such broken incoherent cries of love and joy as the heart finds voice for in such an hour, with tears and caresses, Joscelyn and her parents clung together, regardless of the public street, the passersby, all else drowned into insignificance by the supreme fact that they were restored to one another.

"It was as though this could never be," sobbed Joscelyn happily, "and now,—and now,—it is."

"'Twas a weary waiting, my sweet," whispered her father, kissing her soft hair, "but 'tis over."

"'Twas bitter pain," breathed Elizabeth Armstrong. "But 'tis past, Ralph, 'tis past, Joscelyn, thank God."

Joscelyn turned her beaming eyes to Hugh Kennedy. Her warm fingers held out to him gave him his own instant of perfect felicity.

"You forgive me, Joscelyn?" he said low.

"Can you ask it?" she whispered.

They climbed the steps slowly, and with care, for Ralph Armstrong, not yet fully recovered, tottered a little, and needed the support of the strong arm that Colonel Schuyler held out to him when he reached the door.

Speech came fully when they had reached the draw-

ing-room and Madame, and greetings over, Joscelyn's eager questions poured forth in a cataract.

"Where was't that General Montcalm found you, mother?" she began, seated on a footstool drawn up beside Mistress Armstrong's chair.

"In the convent of the White Nuns of Montreal."

"Tell me how you got safe out of the hands of that fierce Huron?"

"Through the compassion of a French officer. The Huron demanded the bounty offered for prisoners,—two kegs of brandy,—and the officer saw him paid, and taking me from him, led me to peaceful refuge with the nuns."

"And there you stayed,—how long?"

"Till General Montcalm, having constant search made, as he had promised you, discovered that I was there, and took me thence, to send me under convoy to your father at Ticonderoga."

"The world may know General Montcalm as a great soldier," spoke Joscelyn from her overflowing heart. "I know him as true and noble friend."

"Well may you say that, Joscelyn," agreed Mistress Armstrong.

"And then," continued the girl, "when you had come to Ticonderoga?"

Captain Armstrong answered. "Sergeant le Boeuf, with two picked men, brought us over the frozen lake on sledges to Fort Edward, where French prisoners were given him in exchange for us, and we came home from there under escort of our own Hugh Kennedy."

"Sergeant le Boeuf!" exclaimed Joscelyn.

"Ay. He took exceeding pleasure in his part in our

release; and his good wife Manon sends her love by me to her dear mademoiselle. Methinks Ralph would have added his, but for his boyish shyness. As for Susette, she bade me give you her kiss."

"Most kind to me they were," vowed Joscelyn, her eyes misty. "Sometimes I have wondered whether, but for Manon's soup, that day, I should ever have found you in our imprisonment, near together though we were."

"'Tis doubtful, my sweeting, for when you came, a vision of light in my darkness, I was near death."

This much in retrospect, and far more.

Madame Schuyler had the final word that afternoon, spoken with the devoutness for which she was as noted as for her womanly virtues, her social graces, and her great position. When now this one, and now that, had been referred to in terms of admiration and grateful praise for the part they had played in restoring these loved friends of hers to happiness and honor, this noble dame lifted up her voice with that authority that none ever wished to gainsay her.

"Speak as you will," she said, "of those others, who under God's providence have helped to further your good cause, yet it is this sweet soldier maid of yours, winning the hearts of friends and foes alike to her service, and following fearlessly wherever duty called her, who has been His chiefest instrument in bringing it to happy issue."

None but Joscelyn herself would have contested this, and Catalina, come in long since from her sleighing, stopped her mouth with a kiss.

A full day passed before Hugh Kennedy could gain

private speech with Joscelyn, absorbed as she was in the society of her father and mother, and with Catalina at her elbow every spare minute. Yet he could not go back to duty without it.

It was in the twilight hour, before supper of that second day, that fortune favored him. Catalina still twined her curls before the mirror in her bedroom, and all but Joscelyn lingered above stairs.

He found the maid he sought, lovely, and grown suddenly demure, standing upon the hearthrug in the drawing-room, the glow of the fire bringing out every delicate black tendril of her hair, the rose upon her cheek, each graceful line of her supple figure, the gold-brown of her eyes, the shimmer of her yellow taffetas dress. Though she was now but sixteen, the perils and distresses of the past half year had surprisingly matured her. She was a child no longer.

Kennedy, stalwart and broad-shouldered in his ranger's garb, a man of the forests, and of war, contrasted sharply with Joscelyn's vivid beauty and silken raiment, yet there was that between them of dangers borne together, of scenes well-known to each, that made them kin, that gave him courage.

Every instant was precious. Before any came to interrupt him, he must speak.

"Joscelyn," he ventured, his voice husky, and unsteady, "think you that you could never leave your parents now for anyone who loved you as dear as they, —nay, infinitely dearer?"

"I said not so, Hugh," she answered, throwing him a look half roguish, half tender. "Maids have left parents for such cause before. I too, in time, no doubt."

Emboldened by that sweet glance, Hugh Kennedy took a long stride forward. "Joscelyn, dear Joscelyn," he murmured at her rosy ear, "my Joscelyn of the forts!"

THE END













